The GREAT PROBLEM

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Rev. J. E. Flanagan, O. S

THE GREAT PROBLEM

A SERMON FOR EVERY SUNDAY AND FEAST DAY IN THE YEAR

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BY

REV. J. J. BURKE

AUTHOR OF "CHARACTERISTICS OF THE EARLY CHURCH" AND "REASONABLENESS OF CATHOLIC CEREMONIES AND PRACTICES"

Rev. J. E. Bourgon, O. S.

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PREFACE

The Great Problem for each one of us to solve is: How shall I travel along the journey of life that I may attain the happiness of Eternal Life? The solution of this problem is attempted in these short sermons. In a few words the solution is: Avoid evil and do good.

Although only the first sermon is on *The Great Problem* and most of the others on subjects suggested by the Gospels of the different Sundays, still all have the same end in view and the same central idea pervades the various sermons.

Most of them are "Five-Minute Sermons" for early Masses; some, however, are longer and would consume fifteen minutes or more in their delivery. If necessary, the short sermons could be developed into long ones, and most of the longer ones (v. g. by taking one point) could readily be shortened to "Five-Minute Sermons."

In these sermons, no attempt has been made to be eloquent. The aim of the author was to tell the truth clearly and clothe the important old subjects in plain language that would be easily understood.

It is hoped that they possess the essential qualities of *brevity* and *clearness,* that they are in perfect harmony with the teachings of the Catholic Church, and that they may aid many, who heard them or who read them, in solving *The Great Problem.*

January 1, 1909.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE GREAT PROBLEM

"So you also, when you shall see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is at hand." LUKE XXI, 31.

My dear friends, The Gospel read in the Mass on the first Sunday of Advent is most instructive and impressive. It cannot but inspire serious thoughts and earnest reflections. These thoughts are of God, of eternity, of the last day, of man's duty, and of life's problem.

The Great Problem is to learn how to live that we may spend an eternity in the kingdom of God. For since the end of our creation is by serving God here to be happy with Him hereafter, our duty is to advance towards this end. Nothing is so natural as the desire, and nothing so pleasing as the promise of eternal happiness. In pursuit of knowledge the philosopher may examine all creation; may become skilled in every art and science; may dive into the depths of the sea and sift the interior of the earth; may trace the shining orbs and planets in their revolution through the heavens and

number the stars of the firmament; but something will still be wanting to dignify his knowledge and make it profitable to eternal life. The poor unlearned man who tries to know, love and serve God by a good intention in all he does is not only solving the great problem but is a better and a wiser man.

I

If we look out into the world we find the majority of mankind engaged in everything else but serving God. Attached to the goods of the earth they seldom wish for anything but the gratification of their senses. Thus the greater part of Christians live. They do not regard the obligations they owe to God. Dress, amusement and the amassing of wealth are the great business of life to them. God, eternity, the future seem never to enter their minds. They seem to be incapable of a serious thought. Apparently, they never ask themselves the great question: What is the end and aim of my existence? For if they thought of this question, they would soon begin to act seriously, to act, to live as though there is a God, the Creator of all things, Who made them for eternal happiness.

When we consider the wonderful creation of the world out of nothing, we magnify the power that created it; when we view the order and harmony

of nature in all its works, we adore the providence that governs it. Yes, all nature proclaims a Deity. For if a watch suggests a watchmaker, a church an architect, how much more does this beautiful universe with its wonderful order and harmony presuppose a Maker?

II

This maker of all things perishable is an eternal, independent Being. Without a beginning and without end, no period of time can measure the duration of His existence. Angels and the souls of men are immortal; neither are eternal, as they had a beginning. None but God, the only one supreme and independent Being can be properly styled eternal; for His greatness knows no bounds, His perfections are infinite and His existence had no beginning and will have no end. Millions of years may roll away, they will not shorten its duration; millions of ages add nothing to its length.

"Before the mountains were made," says the prophet David, "or the earth and the world was formed: from eternity and to eternity Thou art God." "In the beginning, O Lord, Thou foundest the earth, and the heavens are the works of Thy hands. . . . They shall perish, but Thou remainest. . . . Thou art the self-same and Thy

years shall not fail." (LXXXIX and CI Psalms.)

These words of the inspired writer clearly tell us that God was before this world and that He will continue to be after all shall have passed away. That He always was and always will be, unchanged and unchangeable.

All things created are subject to change and decay. The sun may continue to take his course through the azure sky for ages yet to come; the rivers may flow on for centuries; the grand monuments of art erected to departed heroes may seem to defy the hand of time; the name and fame of great statesmen and conquerors may excite the envy and admiration of nations yet unborn, may pass down from age to age; from generation to generation to the latest posterity; yet all will pass away, all human greatness, all things created will be blotted out. But sitting on His throne of inaccessible glory, surrounded by millions of immortal spirits each shining with a brightness more glorious than the sun, God will live on without change for all eternity. And man will live for all eternity happy or miserable, according to his life here.

III

Whatever our station in life may be we are placed there to work our way toward the kingdom of God,

our heavenly home. Whether we meet with comforts or afflictions, whether our path be one of roses or thorns, whether we walk the pleasant fields of prosperity or the rough road of adversity, we should be neither misled by the one nor discouraged by the other. These comforts or afflictions can make us neither happy nor unhappy. We shall exist when they are no more. We are made for heaven and earthly things should not engage the affections of our hearts. If we were convinced of the truth that things of earth cannot make us happy, they would no longer have any charm.

Nor would we shrink from misfortune and suffering, did we reflect that we can make them meritorious for that eternity which we are soon to expect. Faith teaches us that the tribulations of the Just will be succeeded by joys unending. An eternity of joy or an eternity of pain will be our lot.

These thoughts are suggested by my text: "So you also when you shall see these things come to pass, know that the kingdom of God is at hand." When we compare our fleeting existence here with the eternity of God, how short, how next to nothing, is the life of man. A few days or years and he is no more. One sudden stroke and he is cut off in the middle of his career. Even the longest life is but a fleeting shadow, a passing cloud that dis-

perses in air almost as soon as it is formed. In fact life is a continual death that begins to destroy us when we begin to live. Though short, it is often badly spent. Let us begin to-day to spend the remainder of our fleeting existence better; let us spend it in preparation for that eternal happiness which God has prepared for His elect. Otherwise, we shall be cast with the reprobate into eternal misery. Our days are numbered. We know not when our summons shall come. But when it does come we shall enter into everlasting joys or pains. Are we prepared now to answer at the tribunal of a just God? If not, let us prepare at once. A few years of life on earth are granted that we may prepare ourselves to live eternally in heaven. Let us use these few years well. Let us use them in learning to know, to love and to serve God here, that we may be happy with Him hereafter. This is the solution of the great problem.

Lifted on the wings of heavenly knowledge, we soar in thought above all created things and view the glorious perfections of God revealed that constitute the happiness of saints and angels.

To contemplate God, to meditate upon His perfections, to ponder upon His wonders, to praise and glorify Him, to do His holy will constitute the occupation of the Blessed in heaven; and while we

employ our mind in the same exercise, we begin to do in time what we hope it will be our happiness to do in the kingdom of God for all eternity.

THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

"Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with thee." LUKE I, 28.

We celebrate to-day, my dear friends, the feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin. In the year 1854 the great and glorious Pius IX, surrounded by bishops from every part of the world, proclaimed to all Christendom the dogma of the Immaculate Conception. Since the Council of Ephesus, in the year 431, declared her Mother of God, probably no such rejoicings were known through the whole Christian world as filled the hearts of the true children of God on the eighth of December, 1854, when the last and brightest gem was added to the crown of Mary by our own beloved Pius IX.

I

It must not be forgotten that, when the Church, through her councils or her pontiffs, promulgates a dogma of faith to be believed by all her children, she does not create anything new. She simply defines

what has always been the belief of the faithful. When the Council of Ephesus decreed that in Christ there is but one person and that Mary is the Mother of God; when the Council of Chalcedon decreed that in Christ there are two natures, the Divine and the human, and when the third Council of Constantinople defined that Christ had two wills, these were not new doctrines, though they were new definitions of dogmas. So it is in the doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of Mary. It is nothing new. It has always been believed by the faithful. The Immaculate Conception means that, through the merits of Jesus Christ, Mary was preserved free from the guilt of original sin, that she was always pure and never under the power of Satan.

God created the first man pure, free from sin and its effects. But he transgressed the law of God, and by his transgression all his posterity are born in sin and conceived in iniquity. For, as St. Paul says, "By one man sin entered the world and by sin death; and so death passed upon all men in whom all have sinned." (Rom. V, 12.)

But God promised that the woman should crush the head of the serpent. Now if she was to crush the head of the serpent, it was fit that she should never be under his power, that she should be always pure, free from sin.

There have been exceptions to all universal laws. At the time of the universal deluge, Noah was saved; Lot was saved from the destruction of Sodom; and the Blessed Virgin is an exception to the universal law that all sinned in Adam. Jeremias (Jer. I, 5) and St. John the Baptist (Luke I, 15) were sanctified in their mothers' womb. Was it any more difficult for God to sanctify Mary at the moment of her Conception, of the union of her soul with her body? God chose His own mother. If He had the power to choose her, did He not also have the power to preserve her from the stain of original sin? And does it not appear to you most fitting that God the Holy Ghost should preserve His spouse, and God the Son, His mother from all sin?

II

It is not unreasonable, my dear friends, to honor, to love the saints of God and to believe that they love us. Especially is it not unreasonable to believe that the Blessed Mother of God had greater privileges and higher claims on our hearts than the other saints. It is but natural, then, that we arrive at belief in the spotlessness of the Blessed Virgin even from the beginning of her existence upon earth.

"Hail, full of grace," the angel said to her. If she was full of grace, no vacancy was left for sin. Sin denotes the absence of grace. Hence, if Mary was full of grace she was never subject to sin, she was always pure, her conception Immaculate.

What a beautiful model Mary is for Christians and especially for Christian women. Catholic mothers should not allow their daughters to form their idea of the type of their sex from the novel when they have before them Mary the true type of female excellence. In Mary you find all that is tender and yet all that is firm. In her humility she refused the highest honors, while in patience she endured more anguish and agony than any other woman on earth.

I am sure that one who has Mary for her model and who proposes her as a model to her children, will have the rough places in life's path made smooth and the way to eternal happiness made plain by the intercession of the Immaculate Mother of God.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE PRECURSOR — COURAGE

"Art thou he that art to come, or look we for another?" MATT. XI, 3.

These words, my dear friends, were addressed to our Divine Lord by messengers sent by St. John the Baptist. The people were expecting the Messiah. Adam had scarcely sinned, when God promised that a woman's offspring would crush the serpent's head and thus repair this transgression. On this Divine promise the patriarchs built their hope in a Redeemer who was to come and take away the sins of the world. To confirm this promise the prophets in succeeding ages predicted His coming.

The time for His appearance was at hand when the people attracted by the wonderful works of Jesus, thought He was the Messiah, and St. John the Baptist from his prison sent messengers to Him to ask "Art thou he that art to come or look we for another?" Jesus, instead of answering that He was the Messiah, said to the messengers "Go and tell him that the blind see and the deaf hear, the poor have the Gospel preached to them." He knew

that John would see from these wonderful works that He was the Messiah.

Jesus at the same time gave this testimony of John: "This is he of whom it is written: Behold I send my messenger before Thy face who shall prepare Thy way for Thee."

The Old Testament tells us that a messenger would precede the coming of the Messiah. Our Divine Lord tells us in this text that St. John the Baptist was the messenger.

I

St. John the Baptist was the son of Zachary and Elizabeth. Zachary was a blameless and holy minister of the Old Law, and Elizabeth was a cousin of Mary, the Mother of God. When the time for the coming of the Messiah drew near, an angel announced to Zachary that to Elizabeth would be born a son whose name would be John, which means Grace of God; that he would be filled with the Holy Ghost; that he would convert many Israelites to the Lord their God, and that he would go before the Messiah to prepare for the Lord a perfect people.

This prophecy was fulfilled in John. At the age of 30 years he began to preach. His only clothing was a garment of camel's hair; his food, locusts and wild honey. He went into the desert of Judea,

near the Jordan, and preached the baptism of penance. "Do penance for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. There is one in the midst of you whom you know not. He comes after me, but He was before me and is greater than I am. Every tree that yieldeth not good fruit shall be cut down and cast into the fire."

John reproached the Sadducees and Pharisees, saying: "Ye brood of vipers, who hath shown you to flee from the wrath to come." He braved the wrath of King Herod and told him, "It is not lawful for thee to have the wife of thy brother." On account of this, Herod put an end to his public career by confining him to the prison of Machærus —and afterwards condemning him to death. Herod did not intend to put him to death, but was induced to do so by the craftiness of his brother's wife and daughter. His last moment upon earth was the dawn of a bright eternity in Heaven with Him whose precursor he was.

After burying him, his disciples brought the news of his death to Jesus.

II

The connection between the preaching of St. John the Baptist and the coming of Christ was a lasting one. St. John is still the forerunner of Christ.

He preached the commandments in order to prepare people for Christ's coming — for the reception of the faith. This preaching of the commandments is always the preparation for faith. The awakening of man's conscience causes him to appreciate Christ. Christ and His religion are never properly appreciated until He is enthroned in the conscience. "Unto you that fear my name, shall the Sun of Justice rise." This is, doubtless, why many do not enter the portals of the true Church. Their consciences lie dormant. They need awakening. Surely the truth, the beauty, the antiquity, the unity, the universality of the Catholic Church ought to be sufficient to arrest the attention of any thoughtful person. But the great majority outside her pale do not heed her voice. It is true many souls daily recognize in her the true teacher sent by Christ and submit themselves to her safe guidance. But the many remain behind listless. Some are ignorant of her; some having wrong ideas about her, hate her; and some are favorably inclined to her. It was so with Christ, her Founder. He was called an impostor by some; others totally ignored Him. Some said He was a good man; others that He was a blasphemer and a deceiver of the people. It is always thus. The person or institution that endeavors to benefit mankind will ever find bitter op-

ponents who seek every opportunity to impugn the motives of their benefactors and ascribe them to selfishness, hypocrisy, or ignorance. They treated and still treat Christ the Son of God thus. They called Him an impostor, a blasphemer, a hypocrite, a deceiver of the people. They would not listen to Him. Is it any wonder then, that they treat His Church, His representative on earth, in a similar way? Is it any wonder they refuse to listen to her? If they persecuted the precursor, if they persecuted Christ Himself and put Him to death, is it strange that they persecute His bride, the Church, and do their utmost to destroy her? Those who act thus, who refuse to listen to the claims of Christ's Church, who accuse her of various things of which true history proves her blameless do so either through ignorance or malice. For the person who is invincibly ignorant, there is some hope. God will sooner or later open his eyes to the light and supply all defects. But what can we expect from the malicious or even from him who is indifferent about his eternal salvation? Let us pray that God may enlighten them. Let us pray that God's grace may descend upon all such persons as well as upon all Catholics who are so unfortunate as to be in a state of mortal sin, that they may experience what St. John the Baptist recommended to the Jews, a

true and solid conversion. "Do penance," he says to them, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." This penance that he preached, he practised himself. He learned it from his contact with the Saviour of the world.

For since the Blessed Virgin and St. Elizabeth, the Mother of St. John, were cousins, and since Jesus as man was about the same age as John, it is probable that at times they used to play together as boys. What happiness it must have brought to St. John to have as a playmate the Son of God! What virtue, what knowledge, what sanctity he must have imbibed from the companionship! He had seen the vision of heaven. Ever afterwards he had but one aim, to prepare for heaven himself and to help others prepare for their heavenly home. Let us imitate his glorious example.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

THE PRECURSOR — HUMILITY

"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: make straight the way of the Lord." JOHN I, 23.

My dear friends, when St. John the Baptist was in the wilderness preaching the necessity of penance for the remission of sins, on account of his courage

and his eloquence many of the Jews thought he was the Messiah. Some of the Pharisees went to ask him if he were not the Christ. He said, "No." They asked if he were not Elias or a prophet. Again he answered, "No." "What art thou then," they said. He answered, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: make straight the way of the Lord."

I

Notice, my dear friends, the wonderful humility of St. John the Baptist. Compare it with the pride of many people of the present time. You find many people who never tire of telling how good, how wonderful, how great they are. They continually sound their own praises and exaggerate whatever good quality they may possess.

How different was the example of St. John the Baptist. He would not listen to his own praises. He knew that whatever good was in him came from God. He was especially noted for his humility.

St. John the Baptist, who, the Bible tells us, was sanctified from his very birth, never boasted of his goodness, of his sanctity, but led a retired, a mortified, a humble life.

St. John the Baptist, whose courage and eloquence drew large crowds of followers, was not

puffed up with his own self-importance. In his humility he withdrew from the haunts of men, went into the desert and lived a life of penance, of mortification and self-denial.

St. John the Baptist, than whom, our Lord says, none greater was ever born of woman, when asked who he was, said he was but a voice, a messenger sent by God to prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah.

What a beautiful lesson the life of St. John the Baptist teaches us, a lesson of humility, a lesson of self-denial. Let us not be puffed up by our real or imaginary goodness, or beauty, or knowledge, or wealth. But like St. John the Baptist let us mortify and humble ourselves, for God resisteth the proud but will exalt the humble.

II

While humility is his fundamental virtue many other virtues shine resplendent in the life of St. John the Baptist. He is a model of truthfulness, of temperance, of unselfishness, of honesty and of manliness. These are necessary virtues at all times, and especially at the present time.

When there is so much deception, so much intemperance, so much selfishness and so much hypocrisy in the world, let us, in imitation of St. John the

Baptist, resolve to live humble, true, pure, temperate, manly, Christian lives. Leading such lives here is the way to prepare for heaven.

This, my dear friends, is life's highest aim — to prepare and to help others prepare for heaven. Follow the words and example of St. John the Baptist. "Do penance for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

There is only one way of preparing for judgment — for heaven. We learn this way from St. John's life. The Church frequently reminds us of it. Especially does she do so at the Baptismal Font when her minister says, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments."

Examine yourself by this standard. Forsake the evil way and lead a Christian life.

Keep the divine law of right, of truth, of temperance, of purity, of justice, and when you leave this transitory life, you will enter into life eternal, where with the saints and angels you will enjoy an unending existence of bliss and happiness.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

PREPARATION FOR CHRIST'S COMING

"All flesh shall see the salvation of God." LUKE III, 6.

God wills the salvation of all. He wishes none to be lost. All flesh shall see the salvation of God because God wills not the death of a sinner but that he be converted and live. He came into the world and died for the salvation of all. But He gave us a free will. Consequently, it depends upon our own free choice to see, or not to see the salvation of God. Still we shall be obliged to see Him when He comes at the last day to judge the living and the dead. Another reason why all men shall see the salvation of God is because the salvation of God, and His holy Gospel, was to be made known to the whole world — to Jew and Gentile.

I

During the season of Advent the Church frequently exhorts us to prepare for the feast of Christ's nativity. "Prepare ye the way of the Lord." By these words the Church asks us to prepare for the reception of Jesus on the great feast of Christmas by cleansing our hearts from sin.

For no one is fit to receive Him whose heart is not free from sin.

Our Saviour never went into any house without leaving His blessing. He visited the house of Mary and Martha. The result was, that besides raising their brother, Lazarus, to life, He bestowed such graces that Martha was admitted into heaven as a virgin and Mary as a penitent. He visited Matthew, who, ceasing to be an unjust publican, was converted and became an apostle, evangelist and martyr. He visited Zacchæus and conferred a great blessing, for He said, "This day is salvation come to this house." Zacchæus was a usurer and a lover of the world. He became charitable to the poor, a lover and follower of Christ.

So, too, when Christ comes to us on Christmas day, He will leave His blessings. Those blessings will correspond to the disposition of each individual. If we prepare well beforehand, if we remove the hills of pride, if we make straight the paths of sin, if we humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, we may hope, we may have the utmost confidence that He will confer such blessings upon us as will make us worthy to be exalted to the mansions of eternal bliss.

II

On the contrary, a curse follows those who close their hearts against His sweet presence. If we shut our hearts as the people of Bethlehem did their doors, we are certain to feel the consequences of it some day.

Are you proud and haughty? If so, God cannot find a dwelling place in your soul, for He comes in meekness and humility. If you think too much of money, if you are greedy or avaricious, God cannot dwell in you, for He loves poverty. He is a lover of purity and consequently cannot dwell in the impure soul. Neither will He dwell in the heart that hates its neighbor for He is the Prince of peace who commands us to love even our enemies.

Let us, my dear friends, remove everything that would be detrimental to our salvation though as dear to us as life itself. "For what will it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul." Let us conquer our pride, mortify our evil desires and restrain our guilty passions.

He is coming to visit us and enrich us with His blessings. He is already knocking at our hearts for admission. Can we be so insensible to our eternal welfare as to refuse Him admittance? No. We will give Him our whole hearts cleansed and

purified. We will follow the example of the pious shepherds of Bethlehem, who sought Him until they had the unspeakable happiness of finding Him in the manger; or, like the three Kings of the East, we will give Him our best and richest offering, a pure heart.

By so doing we will prepare the way of the Lord and make straight His paths, so that He may possess our hearts and souls here by His grace, and that we may possess Him in the kingdom of His glory hereafter.

THE BIRTHDAY OF THE SAVIOUR

"For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David." LUKE II, 11.

My dear friends, these words of joy were spoken by the angel of the shepherds near Bethlehem 1900 years ago. As they filled the hearts of the Judean shepherds with joy long ago, so to-day they fill the hearts of all with gladness, love, thanksgiving and reverence.

Every nation celebrates the anniversary of the most important events in its history. The 22nd of February and the 4th of July will never be forgotten by the American people; for they are kept

alive each succeeding year by a proud and grateful nation in honor of the birth of the saviour of our country and also in honor of the birth of independence in America.

To-day we celebrate the anniversary of the birth of Him who was the Saviour, not of one particular portion of the earth, but of the whole world. What joy, then, should fill the hearts of all "For this day is born to you a Saviour."

I

If we cast a glance back, and consider what the world was 1900 years ago, before the coming of Christ, and then consider what it has been since among peoples guided by Christian principles, then we will have some idea of our motives for rejoicing to-day. When Christ came, the majority of mankind was in slavery, without honor, without freedom, without hope. They were sunk into the lowest depths of immorality and crime. He taught them new doctrines concerning the duties of man to man, of the strong to the weak, of the rich to the poor, of man to woman. He inculcated the mutual duty of love and charity. He sent those who loved Him to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to ransom the captive and to visit the sick. He laid special stress

upon the virtues of purity, meekness, humility, patience, faith and love. These doctrines of Christ were instrumental in securing the abolition of slavery, popular rights, free government, protection of children and the poor, in bringing knowledge within the reach of all and in spreading over the whole world institutions of charity.

Is it any wonder then that we rejoice to-day and feel that heaven is brought nearer to us? Angels are, no doubt, singing around us at this moment and assisting us to be more fervent in our acts of thanksgiving and praise. For it is a day of universal joy and the angel's message has not been received in vain.

II

But if it is a day of rejoicing for all, it seems to me to be in a special manner a day of rejoicing for the poor and afflicted. The poor seem to be the especial favorites of Christ. He was born in poverty. He, to Whom the whole world belonged, was born in a stable, destitute of the comforts of life. His parents were poor, and His first adorers on earth were poor, hardworking, mountain shepherds. And afterwards He pointed out as one of the signs that He was the Messiah that "The poor have the Gospel preached to them." And one of the char-

acteristic marks of His Church seems to be that it is the Church of the poor. Is not to-day, then, in a special manner a day of rejoicing for the poor?

When we cast our eyes on that Divine Infant wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying on a little bunch of straw in a stable on that cold December night, can we complain any more of our poor and wretched lot? When we see that God-man suffering from cold and privation, can we refuse to suffer and bear our trials and tribulations patiently for His sake? When we reflect on the humble and abject birth of the Son of God, shall we any longer have those proud thoughts because of our wealth, our clothing or our beauty? No. Let us practise those virtues especially taught by the Infant Jesus in the manger at Bethlehem. Let us practise the Godlike virtues of humility, poverty and mortification, and try as much as possible to imitate Him who came on earth to show us the way to heaven.

He humbled Himself by becoming man. By humility He began and completed His victory over hell. He chose as His friends and apostles the humble. And He says to His followers, "Learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart."

He was rich, but for our sake became poor that by His poverty we might become rich. His whole life, from the crib of Bethlehem to the cross on

Calvary's heights, was one continual series of suffering and mortification endured for sinful man. Without these virtues, and especially without humility, no progress can be made on the road to heaven.

For as pride is the source of almost all sin, so humility is the foundation of all virtue.

Is there not much, then, to cause us to rejoice on this day? And should it not be a day of happiness and joy to all the world?

But, although it is a day of rejoicing for all, and especially for the poor, there are some so weighed down with poverty and misery as to be unhappy. If you know of any such, try to make him happy, at least at this joyful season by relieving his wants. Those who do so may be assured that their own Christmas time will be all the more happy and blessed: for He, who promised that a cup of cold water given in His name should not go unrewarded, will not fail to repay those who remember His poor. Do this and you will have what I most earnestly wish you, A merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE OF CHRISTMAS

A GREAT SIN — INTEMPERANCE

"And the grace of God was in him." Luke II, 40.

As the end of the year draws near, it is well for us to pause, examine ourselves and see how we stand in the sight of Almighty God. Can it be said of each of us "the grace of God is in him"? Many of us, it is true, have received the sacraments during this holy season; while a few have neglected to partake of the graces God is so willing to shower upon us. Some, perhaps, have placed obstacles in the way.

Of the many obstacles to God's grace, none is more potent than intemperance.

I

Intemperance is an inordinate love of eating and drinking. When it refers to intoxicating drink, it is more frequently called drunkenness. Drunkenness is the immoderate use of intoxicating drink to such an extent as to deprive one of the right use of reason.

Drunkenness is a grievous mortal sin. Reason

alone teaches this. For a man who voluntarily deprives himself of the use of reason without a grave cause acts against his rational nature. He lowers himself to the level of the brutes and degrades the image of God that is in him. It is no sin, no crime to be a brute. But is it not a grievous sin, a grave crime for a man to make a brute of himself?

Scripture also teaches the grievousness of the sin of drunkenness. St. Paul says, "Neither the impure, nor idolators, nor drunkards shall possess the kingdom of God." I Cor. VI, 9, 10.

Drunkards insult and outrage God beyond measure by preferring their low appetite to Him and by making as the same Apostle Paul says, "their God of their belly."

Drunkenness is the source of a multitude of other sins. Anger, quarreling, fighting, murder, impurity and all kinds of wickedness are its daughters.

Of all sins it is the unapproachable chief. Not because it is worse in itself than some other sins; but because of its consequences — because of the sin and vice and crime and shame — of the robberies and murders and divorces and suicides that flow directly from it.

On that dreadful day, that day of woe, when the veil will be removed from the bottomless pit and we

will, perhaps, be permitted to gaze down on the poor deluded victims suffering there for all eternity on account of the sin of drunkenness, then and then only will we have the faintest idea of the enormity of this sin and of the great number of victims who have failed on account of it to gain heaven, our being's end and aim. They will then see their great mistake, but it will be too late.

The drunkard not only injures himself, ruins his body and his soul, but he also brings untold misery on others. Losing everything — health, money, honor, friends and peace of conscience — he makes wife and family miserable. He robs them of their bread, of their peace and often of their virtue by his evil example.

The drunkard's home is the picture of hell upon earth. For in it is found blasphemy, quarrelling, disorder and confusion.

Drunkenness undermines the most robust constitution, destroys the body and kills the soul. It is the greatest scourge of the age, the curse of our nation, the terror of the family, the heart-break of the wife and the path that leads to perdition.

It is the curse of the nation from every point of view — politically, materially and morally. It fills our jails and poor houses and causes more sorrow,

pain and misery than fire and sword, famine and earthquake.

II

But let me tell you this: no Catholic is a drunkard. When I say this I mean that no true Catholic, no Catholic worthy of the name, no Catholic who attends to his religious duties is or can be a drunkard. The drunkard may lay claim to be a Catholic, but he is a Catholic only in name. For the true Catholic is one who not only believes all the teachings of Jesus Christ and His Church, but who also practises them. He is a follower of Christ in word and in deed. And would you say that the drunkard is a follower of Jesus Christ, that he practises the teachings of the crucified? The thought is blasphemous.

Jesus Christ taught both by word and example, and His Church ever teaches, the beautiful virtue of temperance — moderation in all things. The Church approves of total abstinence and encourages all to join total abstinence societies.

We know full well that a taste often begets a liking, and a liking, a craving. The only safe course to pursue is never to taste the abominable stuff.

The one who never touches intoxicating drink will never become a drunkard. The one who does indulge occasionally in strong drink is in danger of some time taking too much. The bad habit of treating, the fear of being considered mean or stingy and the desire of being called a good fellow have led many to their temporal and eternal ruin. For this reason all reasonable persons admit that it is far better never to taste the vile poison, that steals away the brain and changes men to demons.

The work of temperance, and of total abstinence is a slow, a difficult and an unpopular one. But it is right, it is God's work and should be aided by all true followers of the Saviour.

Every good work, every strong work, every enduring work, like the mighty oak whose lofty head and wide spreading branches defy the fiercest storms of winter, is of slow and steady growth.

The better the work, the slower the growth and frequently the greater the opposition it excites. Take as an example the Catholic Church, the greatest of God's works on earth. How slow has been its growth! How great has ever been the opposition to it!

It is true, when we consider the violent opposition to it at all times, its growth has been to a

certain extent marvelous; but when we consider its Divine origin, its beautiful code of faith and morals and its sublime mission, we wonder that its growth has not been greater.

As another example, take our temperance societies such as the Knights of Father Mathew. Next to the means of grace provided us by God's holy Church, I know of nothing capable of doing more good than membership in one of these societies.

As the devil and bad people are continually opposing the work of God's Church, so you will find people claiming to be Christians who oppose such societies and everyone who works for temperance, for justice, for honesty, for righteousness and for the good of humanity.

As God's Church, though its growth was slow through the centuries, triumphed over all her enemies; so, too, the temperance cause, though of slow growth, will triumph in the end.

Endeavor at all times to be on the side of temperance, of justice, of honesty, and of God.

Follow the teaching of the Church. Frequently approach the sacraments. The grace of God is all powerful.

Avoid the occasion, keep away from drinking places and companions. Join a temperance society,

if convenient for you to do so. Even if you do not need it yourself, do so for the good you may do to others.

One who avoids the occasion, who follows the teaching of the Church and partakes of her means of grace will obtain the grace to overcome all temptation.

Of such a person it can be said, "And the grace of God was in him."

THE FEAST OF THE CIRCUMCISION

THE BLASPHEMER

"His name was called Jesus." LUKE II, 21.

My dear friends, our Divine Saviour received His Holy Name on the feast of the Circumcision. That name is the holiest of all names, because it was chosen by God Himself, because it is the name of the holiest of beings and because it means Saviour. "There is no other name under heaven given to men, whereby we may be saved."

Since the name Jesus is so holy, we should honor it at all times by our words and by our actions. We should never dare to take the holy name in vain, to curse or swear, or blaspheme.

I

God has given us a tongue — the use of speech that we may give Him glory, and praise His holy name. How ungrateful we are, then, when we turn this gift against Him.

I have even seen infants,— I shudder to think of it,— I have seen them when scarcely able to lisp a name, taught by the father to take God's name in vain instead of to bless His name and pray to Him. Then the admiring parent would sit back and laugh at what he considered manly in his little hero. It is no wonder that in such persons the habit grows and spreads untold evil and that God is sorely dishonored, insulted and outraged.

That tongue given to bless God is turned to curse man who is made after the likeness of God. Far better would it be not to be able to speak, than not to be able to restrain the tongue from cursing. It will not do to say "I did not mean it: I would not for the world wish such an evil to befall any human being, I was in a passion." For there is a fault somewhere. You have reason and you have prayer as a means of grace. With reason and prayer you can control your passion and restrain your tongue.

Swearing is as common as cursing. Whenever the name of God, of heaven, of the soul or any of

the nobler works of Creation is used with "by" or "upon" it is swearing; and even the common use of God's holy name is a sin, for, "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain."

If you were in prison bound by chains which you could not sever, and some kind and generous benefactor would come along and deliver you from prison, loose your chains, or even give his life to free you, would you not be the lowest, the meanest of mankind to talk badly, insultingly of such a person or listen while others insult him?

Our Saviour is this kind and generous benefactor. He freed us from the chains of sin. He gave His life for us and how do we repay Him? By cursing, by swearing, by taking His name in vain, by insulting Him, by our blasphemous language?

See, then, if you have contracted such a habit. If so, begin at once to correct it. Resolve not to curse or swear to-morrow; or at least reduce the number of times until the habit is broken up.

II

Did you ever consider what a fearful example it is to others — to the young and especially to your own children? We all have an influence over others. And as nothing so easily inclines to virtue,

so nothing so powerfully attracts to vice as the conduct of those around us.

Our Lord says, "Woe to that man by whom scandal cometh; better were it for him that a millstone were tied about his neck and he were cast into the sea."

And particularly, woe to the parent who scandalizes, who gives bad example to his children. The wicked example of the parent is frequently seen in the crimes of his posterity. For "Evil communications corrupt good manners."

How can an immoral parent teach the doctrines of morality? What effect will it have, if the parent who gets drunk and curses and swears teaches his child not to do so?

The child thinks the parent is about perfect. If the parent curses and swears, the child, no matter what he is taught, will say "I am going to do just as papa does." If you love your children, then, if you love your neighbors, give them a good example.

III

The blasphemer is sure to be punished; if not in this world, in the next. In the Old Law promulgated by God Himself, we learn from the book of Leviticus XXIV, 16, that the blasphemer was taken

outside the camp and stoned to death by the people.

Blasphemy is still as great a crime, though not always punished in this world. The blasphemous kings, Antiochus and Herod, were literally devoured alive by worms.

In recent times we have heard of instances of blasphemers being instantly killed or struck dumb after uttering a horrible oath without being given time for repentance. And is it any wonder that God should at times show His utter detestation of that unnatural, ungrateful crime, the total depravity of which will be known only in Eternity?

The great wonder is that He does not instantly strike down every one who dares to insult His Holy Name. Beware! blasphemer! the next time you curse and swear may be your last.

Abhor blasphemy, because nothing is more shocking than to curse God and His creatures with a tongue which has been sanctified by the body and blood of Jesus Christ in Holy Communion.

Blasphemy is the sin of the Jews who crucified our Lord, and it is the sin of the damned in hell. It is a scandal especially to the young. Woe to the parents who teach it to their children. It draws down God's malediction, His curse on those guilty of it.

Prayer is the best remedy for blasphemy. Pray devoutly, pray frequently, and you will not blaspheme, you will not curse and swear. Make a good confession in reparation for the past and resolve for the future to avoid bad companions and other occasions.

If you are about to curse or swear, or if you hear another blaspheme, say, "Blessed be God; Blessed be the name of the Lord;" or, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do," or even politely ask him not to speak disrespectfully of God's Holy Name. By so doing you will gain merit for eternal life.

EPIPHANY OR SUNDAY WITHIN THE OCTAVE

THE EPIPHANY

"And entering the house, they found the child with Mary, His Mother, and falling down, they adored Him. And opening their treasures, they offered Him gifts, gold, frankincense and myrrh." MATT. II, 11.

The Church, my dear friends, in her series of festivals, desires to appeal to the heart as well as to the intellect of her followers. Beginning with the birth of the Son of God on Christmas day, she

follows Him in her festivals step by step until His tragic death on Mount Calvary.

If we learn from the Divine Infant, lying in the stable on Christmas, the virtues of poverty, humility and mortification; we likewise, learn obedience to the laws of our Church and of our country when we see Him obey the law of circumcision eight days after His birth. In other festivals in His honor we have presented to our consideration charity, forgiveness of injuries and all other virtues.

To-day we celebrate the feast of the Epiphany.

I

Epiphany means manifestation. It was on this day, the 12th after His birth, that He manifested Himself to the Gentiles. It is sometimes called Little Christmas or the Christmas of the Gentiles.

The first adorers of our Lord in the stable of Bethlehem were Jews — shepherds who were led thither by the angels singing "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to men of good will." The Gentiles were likewise led to adore Him in the manger in a miraculous manner. For Christ was the Saviour of all — of Jew and Gentile. And if the Jew was led to the Infant Jesus by an angel, the Gentile was led by a miraculous star.

At the birth of Our Lord this star appeared in

the East. Many saw this wonderful star. But three wise men followed it. Thus "Many are called, but few are chosen." The star went on before them and directed their steps. When they came near Jerusalem, the star disappeared. They entered the city, and, not being ashamed to confess Christ, asked "Where is He who is born King of the Jews? We have seen His star in the East and have come to adore Him." Herod asked the scribes and priests where Christ was to be born and was told that it was in the city of Bethlehem. Then Herod told the wise men to go and search for this child and bring him word. And when they were outside the city "Behold the star which they had seen in the East went before them until it stood over where the child was. . . . And they going in saw the Child and Mary His Mother. And falling down they adored Him. And opening their treasures they offered Him gold, frankincense and myrrh." And being admonished in their sleep not to go back to Herod who wished to kill Jesus, the wise men returned another way to their own country.

II

Thus we see, my dear friends, that the birth of Jesus Christ was a subject of joy both to Jew and Gentile. Both were invited to come and partake of

the common blessing. For at the time that the angel called the Jews in the persons of the shepherds, the star called the rest of mankind in the persons of the three Holy Kings. Jesus Christ was born for the salvation of all mankind. Hence He wished that all would begin to know Him in the infancy of His humanity. The rich and the poor, the Jew and the Gentile, the ignorant and the learned, the king and the subject were all called to Bethlehem to adore the Divine Infant lying in the manger. Lying there on that bed of straw who would suspect Him of being the God of heaven and earth? No external sign of His Divine character could be seen. He appeared to the senses to be a child of misery, distress, affliction and tears. Everywhere in His surroundings was poverty and want. But the Magi did not doubt. They saw with the eyes of faith. Under the form of a newborn infant they believed the eternal God to be present. They were convinced that the child they beheld was their God, the long expected Saviour and Redeemer of mankind.

Knowing this, they fell down and adored Him. Then opening their treasures they offered Him gold, frankincense and myrrh. Gold is the tribute usually paid to kings. Jesus Christ was the King of kings, hence in this light gold was offered Him.

Frankincense was offered to God in the temple morning and night. The smoke of the incense represents the prayers ascending to the throne of grace.

Myrrh was used by the Jews in embalming. Hence as offered by the Magi it represents the humanity of Christ.

Gold was offered Him as king, incense as God and myrrh as man; jointly offered by the Magi they represent the two natures of God and man in the person of Jesus Christ.

The Magi worshipped God in spirit and in truth. The same spirit must animate every true follower of Jesus Christ. We have been called to the true faith as the Magi were. This faith has been announced to the world by Jesus Christ Himself; it has been sanctioned and confirmed by miracles; it has been handed down to succeeding generations by inspired Evangelists; and it has been preserved in its original purity by the infallible teaching of the Catholic Church. This great gift has been bestowed upon us. Hence we owe God a debt of adoration for so singular a mercy.

The tribute of love, the tribute of devotion and the tribute of self-denial are the three acts of homage signified by the gold, frankincense and myrrh of the Magi. This homage of love, devotion and self-denial God exacts from every Christian.

Let us, my dear friends, endeavor to render God this homage. Let us follow the teaching of the Church — the star of Bethlehem for us — that bright and evening star that will lead us to Jesus; it will guide us through all the trials of life; it will light us in the darkness of the valley of death, and it will lead us safely to the other shore into the haven of eternal rest.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

"At that time there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. And Jesus also was invited." JOHN II, 1, 2.

The presence of Jesus and Mary at the marriage feast of Cana sanctified the Christian family and Christian marriage.

The Christian family is the foundation of Christian society and Christian marriage is the basis of the Christian family. Without marriage neither the family nor society could exist. Society did not institute marriage. It was instituted before all society by God Himself for the propagation and preservation of the human race. Hence it is to be governed not by the laws of society but by the laws of God and His Church.

The fundamental law and absolute condition of Christian marriage is its unity and indissolubility. It is the union of one man with one woman for the purpose intended by the Creator, which union is to last forever. Such was marriage in the beginning and to such it was restored by our Saviour when He also made it a Sacrament of His law and a type of His union with His Church.

On account of false teaching and unrestrained passions many have lost the true notion of the institution of marriage. Hence we see family ties loosened, divorces on the increase, family honor stained, parental authority disrespectfully treated, domestic quarrels the order of the day, the sacred obligations of wife and mother often cast aside, shameful crimes common and the laws of nature unblushingly trampled under foot.

If the teachings of Christ and His Church regarding marriage were obeyed these and other evils would cease.

I

The words of Christ regarding matrimony clearly sustain the teaching of the Church that it is the union of one man with one woman and it is to last during the lifetime of both. He says in the V chapter of St. Matthew, 32 verse: "But I say

to you that whosoever shall put away his wife excepting the cause of fornication, maketh her to commit adultery, and he that shall marry her that is put away committeth adultery." These words clearly teach the doctrine of the Catholic Church that there is no such thing as a divorce which will permit either party to marry during the lifetime of the other. In the XIX chapter of St. Matthew, 5th and 6th verses, he says "A man shall leave father and mother and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be in one flesh. Therefore now they are not two but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." Can language be clearer? No human power can break the bond of matrimony. It is the work of God. And let no man meddle with it.

St. Paul taught the same doctrine. In the First Epistle to the Corinthians, VII chapter, 39 verse, he says "A woman is bound by the law as long as her husband liveth; but if her husband die, she is at liberty, let her marry whom she will." By these words St. Paul clearly states that marriage is indissoluble, that the woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives, and that no state, no human law can loose the bond that binds them together.

Such was the doctrine taught by Christ, such was the doctrine taught by St. Paul and the Apos-

tles, and such is the doctrine ever taught by the Catholic Church from the time of Christ and the Apostles to the present.

II

In defense of the unity and indissolubility of marriage, in defense of the doctrine of Christ and His Apostles that marriage is the union of one man with one woman, to last while both survive, the Church has had many a severe conflict. And had she not fought this battle bravely for the sanctity, the unity and the indissolubility of marriage, Europe would be in as degraded a condition to-day as are the Mahometan nations.

History tells us of the conflict between Gregory VII and Henry IV of Germany in behalf of Henry's wronged and banished wife.

All are acquainted with the conflict between Pope Clement VII and Henry VIII of England, who wished to discard his lawful wife and marry another. The Pope could not grant him permission to do that which was contrary to the laws of God and His Church. The lustful monarch, disregarding the laws of God and His Church, married Ann Boleyn while his lawful wife Catherine of Aragon was still living. Soon tiring of the charms of his new wife, he had her beheaded and married another

and did not stop until he had married and murdered or divorced five or six. By the refusal to grant a divorce to Henry VIII, England was lost to the Church, but the divine principle of the unity of marriage was not and could not be sacrificed. The Popes ever guarded and defended this fundamental principle.

And if Christian woman is respected and honored; if the Christian mother is holy and venerable; if the Christian home is dear to the heart of every true man, it is due to the doctrine of the Church on Christian marriage.

III

The system of divorce is threatening to destroy this holy institution. When governments attempt to dissolve the bond of marriage which Christ declared indissoluble, then we can look for nothing in the future better than Mormon degradation.

But Christians of all denominations are beginning to realize the value of the teachings of the Catholic Church, and are waking up to the alarming growth of the curse of divorce. They are beginning to see that if the marriage tie is loosened the family is destroyed; and if the family is destroyed, society, the state falls to ruin. Divorce destroys the mutual love which should exist between man

and wife. It causes unhappiness and often leads to the foulest crimes. If a person know there is no such thing as divorce which will permit one party to marry during the lifetime of the other, he will naturally be more careful in choosing a life-companion. This fact will also cause married persons to cultivate mutual love, to support each other's defects, to overlook many imperfections and to overcome little dislikes and disagreements.

Divorce encourages quarrels. If a married person believes that by quarrels and crimes marriage can be broken, is it not a powerful inducement for one with evil inclinations to quarrel with his spouse or to fall into foul sins?

Divorce, besides, renders the proper education of children impossible. The proper education of children requires the teaching and influence of both father and mother.

God made Christian marriage the basis of the Christian family, and the Christian family the foundation of Christian society. With its unity and indissolubility marriage is a powerful safeguard of our best and dearest interests. Let divorce creep in, and society is soon flooded with countless evils. Divorce instead of promoting the happiness of the discontented spouses as is claimed, diminishes it. He who has not been a comfort to his first wife

will confer little happiness upon a second spouse. Nor will he be a gainer. Comparing his second with his first spouse the balance, after some time, will always favor the former. His affections are divided, and he is unhappy.

The Christian husband and wife, knowing the unity and indissolubility of the marriage tie, live in peace and honor together, together they rear the issue of their union, teaching them to be good children, good citizens and good Christians; together after a long, a happy and a prosperous union they return to dust; and together they meet again beyond the confines of the tomb — yes, they meet to part no more.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

MIXED MARRIAGES

"Be *not wise* in your own conceits." Rom. XII, 16.

Many young people have a very high opinion of themselves. They imagine they know more than their elders. They are wise in their own conceits. Especially is this true when they are about to choose a companion for life. They will not listen to the advice of parents or pastor, but thoughtlessly look

outside the Church for the one to whom they wish to entrust their life's happiness.

Having called your attention on another occasion to the evil of divorce, I wish to speak briefly to you to-day on another evil which causes woe and misery second only to that caused outside the Church by divorce. I refer to the evil of mixed marriages. The Church, to show her disapprobation of mixed marriages, will not permit them to be solemnized in the house of God, nor with any religious ceremonies.

But why does the Church object? Why cannot a Catholic marry a non-Catholic without a dispensation? Is not the Church unreasonable in placing obstacles in the way? No, she is not unreasonable. Her objection is in perfect agreement with reason. She objects, because mixed marriages are opposed to the very ends for which God instituted marriage. God instituted marriage that the man and wife might mutually assist each other in knowing, loving and serving Him, that they might be companions on the road to heaven and that they might teach their children the way to heaven. In mixed marriages both these ends are frustrated. I speak of mixed marriages as a rule. There are some exceptions.

I

The parties constituting a mixed marriage cannot be companions on the road to heaven, since they are trying to go there by separate roads. They cannot assist each other in the knowledge and service of God, since what one says God teaches, the other says is a mockery or idolatry. They can have no family prayer with its elevating influence. In fact, everything pertaining to religion, even the name of God, must be prohibited, "for peace sake." In the household, everything has its time and place except the one thing necessary; every topic, whether of gain or enjoyment, has its interest and is talked over with pleasure and profit, but if mention is made of religion an animated discussion arises or a coldness ensues that has no elevating effect. Even when both are of the same religion, difference of natural disposition may and often does cause much unhappiness and misery. How much more so when of different religions. They disagree upon that which above all they should agree upon. If man and wife are one, they should be one in religion, one in everything. A disunited family makes a desolate home. Unity and harmony should characterize the life of the family. This is impossible when they differ in religion, when one is a Catholic.

Before marriage all is sunshine; not a cloud appears to darken the sky; no fear is felt for the future. Promises are easily made and may be as easily broken. In nine cases out of ten they are broken. You know that when the Church grants a dispensation for a Catholic to marry a Protestant, both parties must promise: 1st, that the Catholic will have full liberty to practise the teachings of the Catholic religion; 2nd, that all the children shall be baptized by the Catholic priest and trained in the Catholic faith; 3rd, that the Catholic will endeavor to convert the non-Catholic. How long are these promises kept? How often are they kept for even one year? Seldom. Very, very seldom. Many think when they hear priests preaching on the evils of mixed marriages that much of what is said is exaggerated. But I can assure you that during the time I have been a priest I have seen such sacred promises broken, such woe, such misery, such heart-achings and breakings resulting from mixed marriages that I am firmly convinced that half of their evils have not been told and that it would be infinitely better for any and every Catholic young woman never to marry than to marry a man who is not a Catholic. It is difficult for non-Catholics to understand this. But it will not be so difficult to understand when they remember

that to the Catholic who has been well trained in his religion there is nothing dearer to his heart; that it is his aid in need, his consolation in affliction, his strength in temptations and persecutions and that he will work for it, he'll talk for it, he'll fight and, if need be, he'll die for it.

II

If his religion is so dear to him, if he will do so much for it, he will not expose himself to the danger of losing it. "He who loves mother or father more than me," says our Saviour, "is not worthy of me." The good Catholic who really loves his religion as he ought, loves it better than any man or woman, than anything upon earth, and he will not run the risk of losing it for anybody or anything upon earth, as the person does who enters a mixed marriage. He or she is not the only one exposed. The second end for which God instituted marriage is to bring up children to know and love God. Thousands of children are lost to the faith in the United States as the result of mixed marriages. Of the eighty millions of our population, only twelve or fourteen millions are practical Catholics; whereas at least thirty or forty millions ought to be Catholics. This loss is caused largely by mixed marriages. Perhaps you doubt this. Every priest can

tell you that the results of mixed marriages are disastrous.

But you flatter yourselves that it will not be the same in your case. So did every one of the countless thousands who, notwithstanding the warnings of friendly voices, struck the rock that shipwrecked themselves and numbers of others.

Young men and young women, if you are associating with non-Catholics withdraw before it is too late, before you are sorry. Fathers and mothers, for God's sake, for your own sake, for the sake of your children, for the sake of your own immortal souls and the souls of hundreds of others do not, do not, I repeat, allow your children to mingle with non-Catholics. Stop the evil in its source, before it goes too far. Better — far better for your happiness in this world as well as in the next never to marry than to marry a non-Catholic and have unhappiness here and hereafter.

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

DETRACTON AND CALUMNY

"Owe no man anything, but to love one another; for he that loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the law." ROM. XIII, 8.

In order to bear fruit, the spirit of charity must be felt in the heart of the Christian. Christianity does not consist in external forms and ceremonies alone. Praying, giving alms and other good works are but the external manifestations of what the feelings of the heart should be. They are resorted to in order to excite these feelings in the heart. Still, a person may pray, fast, give alms liberally, and appear outwardly good and pious, and at the same time be bad, impious, rotten to the core.

Let us not deceive ourselves, then, by imagining that we are acceptable to God because we do those good works and appear outwardly to be good. The Pharisees believed themselves to be good because they fasted and prayed; still our Lord declared that they were "whited sepulchres full of dead men's bones and all rottenness."

If we do all kinds of good works and have not charity we are nothing. Charity — love is the fulfilling of the law. If we love God, we love our

neighbor, and if we love our neighbor, we will say and do nothing to injure him.

I

A person's good name, his character, is more precious than gold and silver. It is surprising how many apparently good Christians, who fast, pray and attend to their other religious duties — it is surprising, I say, how many there are who do not scruple to detract, to backbite, to calumniate, to talk uncharitably of their neighbor. Such persons are like the Pharisees, rotten on the inside. They have not the spirit of Christianity. They are not true Christians. They do not love God; for, if they did, they would love their neighbor. They who love their neighbor will say nothing to injure him.

Detraction or backbiting injures the good name of our neighbor by revealing things that are true. Calumny injures him by telling what is false. Slander is malicious circulation of calumny or detraction. Every one has a right to his good name, though he may have done sinful things that are not public.

They who make public those things or attribute to him things that he neither did nor thought of, take away his good name, which to him is more than

money, temporal possessions, or maybe more than life itself. "A good name is better than great riches," says Solomon, "and good favor is above silver and gold."

Remember how you have felt when things were said of you that lowered you in the estimation of those around you, whose opinion you valued.

This thought will assist you in understanding the injustices you are, perhaps, daily inflicting upon others by your busy, ungovernable, uncharitable tongue. You cannot be too careful about what you say of your neighbor. If what you say lessens your neighbor in the opinion of others you are guilty of the sin of detraction. You have inflicted an injury which may ruin him or her forever. You have sown discord where there was peace, disturbed the quiet of families and caused trouble, dissensions and quarrels among friends.

II

By the sin of detraction, by backbiting, calumny and talebearing is caused an injury which it is difficult, almost impossible, to repair. But reparation must be made, or heaven will be lost. The detractor must not only restore the good name unjustly taken away; but he must also make reparation and

restitution for all the temporal damage caused to the person. Simple detraction or backbiting may be repaired by saying before the same persons who listened to the detraction that you did wrong in speaking badly of the person; but calumny cannot be repaired without retracting all that was said, even, if by so doing you do an injury to yourself.

The difficulty, impossibility, of repairing the sins of the tongue,— backbiting, calumny, talebearing, — is well illustrated by a penance which, it is said, St. Philip Neri imposed upon a certain loquacious woman who was continually talking uncharitably of her neighbors. Although the story has often been told, it is such an apt illustration that it will bear repetition. This woman, so the story goes (and she no doubt told it herself) was guilty of frequently talking uncharitably of others, saying things that were untrue, things that were true but not public, things that injured others in their reputation and in their business.

She was told by St. Philip Neri, as a penance, to get a fowl, kill it, and on a windy day go through the field scattering the feathers in all directions. Having done so he told her to return to him and he would complete the penance.

When she returned he told her to go and gather

up the feathers she had scattered. She said it was impossible to do so, as they had been blown far and wide by the wind.

The saint thus gave her a beautiful and a useful lesson, and she was never afterwards known to talk uncharitably of her neighbors; for the truth was indelibly impressed upon her mind, that as the feathers were wafted by the wings of the wind to the four parts of the world, so slanderous conversations, uncharitable remarks, backbiting and calumny are wafted by the wings of gossip to all parts; and, as it was impossible to gather together again all the feathers, so, too, is it impossible to repair all the injury done by the long, interminable tongues of gossips, meddlesome persons and scandal mongers.

III

If you hear scandal and keep it to yourself but very little harm is done. If you talk about it, unknown harm will be done to thousands by the evil thoughts occasioned; you act the part of the Pharisee yourself, by trying to show your innocence in being shocked at another's sin; you show your lack of love of your neighbor by your insatiable craving to abuse, to injure him; and you do him an irreparable injury — an injury you would not like others

to do to you if placed in similar circumstances. And "let him who stands beware lest he fall." To repeat a scandal may be more criminal than to give it; and the person who delights in talking of the faults of others is in nine cases out of ten worse than those talked about.

The person who listens willingly to detraction, to scandal, to uncharitable talks about neighbors, sins almost as grievously as the one who does the talking. If possible, we should defend our neighbor; or, we should show by our looks, our disapprobation.

Let us do on such occasions, as we would wish to be done by. Let us condemn not, that we may not be condemned.

In this, as in everything else relating to justice or charity, we should follow the golden rule and do unto others as we would have others do unto us.

Let us, my dear friends, ask God to impress deeply upon our hearts those maxims of justice and charity; never to do unto others, what we would not wish to have done to ourselves; never to say of another what we would not wish to have said of ourselves; never to speak of another as we would not have others speak of us.

Let us, in imitation of our Divine Model, be humble and kind of heart and never say of our

neighbor an unkind, an ungenerous, or uncharitable word.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

FORGIVENESS OF INJURIES

"Even as the Lord hath forgiven you, so you also." Col. III, 13.

The spirit of Jesus Christ, the spirit that animates His Church and that animated the inspired Apostle when writing these words is a spirit of Charity, a spirit of forgiveness of injuries. The spirit of the world is one of revenge. "Overcome evil by good." How many of those claiming to be Christians do it? "O the rarity of Christian Charity under the sun!" We profess to be Christians and we act like heathens. The heathen returned good for good and evil for evil. It is only the Christian, the true Christian, who can return good for evil, who can overcome evil by good and forgive those who have injured him.

Some of the most beautiful teachings of our Lord are contained in the celebrated sermon on the mount. He ascended a mountain in Galilee, followed by a large multitude of people, and sat down to teach them. Many and important were the les-

sons He taught. It was on that occasion that He gave to us His own prayer which teaches among other things forgiveness. It was then He taught the eight beatitudes. There are certain passages in the Gospel which cannot but have attracted our notice. Among those are, no doubt, the beatitudes. Perhaps the most practical, and at the same time the most frequently neglected of the beatitudes, is the one that teaches us to be merciful. "Blessed are the merciful." I wish to call your attention to-day to a particular division of mercy, namely, forgiveness of injuries.

I

Almost every day we have occasion to think some one has offended us. Our first thought is "I will have satisfaction"; "I will be revenged;" "I will remember this." How often, alas! are innocent amusements broken by the dark cloud of passion. First, perhaps, it is an accident that offends some one, and he shows that he feels it. The other stands upon his right or what he thinks is his right. If the scene does not end in blows, there is a coldness produced which too often leaves behind a settled hatred and feeling of revenge. Humanly speaking, it is hard to forgive. Other works of mercy are easier. But if we are treated with con-

tempt, insulted in a crowd, it will be looked upon as cowardly not to resent the insult. Still, after all, who is the brave man? Is it not he who can conquer himself, who has control of his passions? Religion, however, does not command us to hold our tongue and bind our arms. No; we are allowed to defend ourselves, but not through a motive of revenge. There are particularly two motives prompting us to forgiveness of injuries: one of these is the example of Jesus Christ, and the other is our dearest and eternal interests.

II

Who can look upon the example of our Lord Jesus Christ insulted, buffeted, calumniated, spit upon, slapped in the face, dragged through the streets by a vile rabble and finally crucified on Calvary — when the sun hid his face and heaven frowned upon the horrible spectacle — who can look upon that God-man dying in agony on the Cross and forgiving His enemies, His murderers with the words: "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" — who, I repeat, can look upon that sublime spectacle and not resolve in his heart to henceforth forgive those who may injure him?

If He should appear with a crown of thorns,

bleeding and disfigured and ask us to forgive our enemies, would not the worst of us be moved to tears and say "O God, Thy will not mine be done."

III

Our eternal welfare prompts us to forgiveness of injuries. It is not a counsel, it is a precept. We must forgive if we would be forgiven. "But I say to you," says Jesus Christ, "love your enemies; do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you."

How can you say the Lord's prayer, if you have hatred in your hearts for another? How can you say "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us," if you do not forgive them? "Overcome evil by good." Forgive your enemy no matter who he is, no matter what he may have done to you. But if you do not, neither will your heavenly Father forgive you your offences and you will go to hell instead of heaven for all eternity.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY

THE CHURCH

"The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed." MATT. XIII, 31.

According to commentators, the kingdom of heaven here means God's kingdom on earth, His Holy Church. It is compared to a grain of mustard seed, because, as the mustard seed, though small, grows, in some places, to be a large tree; so God's Church, though small and humble in the beginning, spread its branches through kingdoms and empires until it became a mighty tree.

The Catholic Church as it is to-day has existed for centuries. Concerning the Church the following questions may be asked: first, did Christ found it? second, why did Christ found the Church?

I

That a revelation has been made to man is certain. Prophecies and miracles, especially those of Christ, abundantly establish this fact. Certain it is too, that God has revealed these truths for the purpose of leading man to his last end, to eternal happiness, and that He has entrusted this revelation to

the guardianship of the Church. It is the duty of the Church, not only to preserve and interpret the written word and to teach its true meaning, but also to preserve and teach us the revelation which we have received, not by writing, but by word: to guard in all their purity those sacred traditions and truths which she received from her Lord and His Apostles, "which, if they were written, everyone," as St. John says, "the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written."

Hence, we say that the two sources, fountains, of revelation are the Church and Holy Scriptures; or that the Church is the proximate rule of faith while the Bible is the remote rule. By the Church we mean a society instituted by Christ to profess and teach His doctrine, to promulgate His laws, and to administer His sacraments. It was founded by Christ before the New Testament was written.

That the Church was founded by Christ needs no proof. All history shows it. From its very foundation He has been recognized as its founder. Besides, if we go up the stream of time century by century to the end of age of Christ, we shall find that there has been an uninterrupted series of Pontiffs, from the glorious reigning Pontiff, Pius X, to St. Peter, the first Pope; and that the contin-

uation of bishops, priests, doctors, and fathers and councils, both general and particular, has been such as to show beyond doubt, that Christ was its founder. Finally, the Scriptures of the New Testament, which were written after the Church was founded, teach us about its institution and origin.

History tells us that many years after Christ founded His Church, some of His teachings and doings were consigned to writing. Hence we see that the primitive, the first Christians learned the truth of Christ from the Church which was founded by Him before the New Testament was written.

II

Christ instituted His Church to teach His doctrine and administer His sacraments till the end of time. He made the Church His representative on earth and commanded all to hear it. "He that heareth you heareth me, and he that despiseth you despiseth me." The Church instituted by Christ to teach His doctrine and administer His sacraments is the Catholic Church. The Catholic Church is divine. The Catholic Church is to-day, and she will be till time shall be no more, the only divinely appointed teacher of Christ's doctrine and dispenser of His sacraments.

He who believes this, and refuses to listen to the

Catholic Church cannot be saved, for he refuses to listen to Christ Himself and to make use of the means Christ instituted for attaining salvation. "If he will not hear the Church let him be to thee as the heathen and publican."

Everyone who believes that Jesus Christ is true God, admits that He taught a doctrine, gave laws and instituted means of salvation and that He made salvation depend upon believing His doctrine, obeying His laws and making use of the means of salvation.

It is a historical as well as a scriptural fact that Christ entrusted the teaching of His doctrine, the promulgating of His laws and the dispensing of His sacraments to His Church and to nobody else: "Going therefore," He says, "teach ye all nations." (St. Matt. XXVIII, 19.) And that His Church may be able to do this at all times, He promised to remain with her forever. "And behold I am with you all days."

Now if Christ made salvation depend on believing His doctrine, obeying His laws, and making use of His sacraments and other means of grace, and, if He entrusted the teaching of His doctrine, the promulgating of His laws and the dispensing of His sacraments to His Church, it necessarily follows as night follows day, that

whoever refuses to listen to His Church, refuses to receive the means of salvation, and hence cannot be saved, according to the words of our Lord "He that believeth not, shall be condemned."

But let me not be misunderstood. I say, whoever refuses to listen to the Church which he believes to be the divinely appointed teacher, cannot be saved. I do not say that all inside the Church will be saved; for there are many inside her bosom who refuse to listen to her teaching — many who get drunk, who curse, who break the commandments of God and of His Church daily. It will do such no good to belong to the Church which they refuse to obey, unless they repent immediately, before it is too late, for as they live so will they die, and if they live refusing to obey the Church, they will die refusing to obey and listen to her and cannot be saved.

Nor do I say that all outside the body of the Church will be lost. No. God forbid. For no doubt there are persons outside the Church not through their own fault — persons who believe with a supernatural faith all the truths which they know to have been revealed by God and are ready to believe every doctrine which they know to be revealed — persons who even firmly believe their religion to have been revealed by God and who would

enter the Catholic Church did they know it was the true Church of Christ. Such persons belong to the soul of the Church and will not be deprived of salvation on account of not externally belonging to it, provided they live uprightly and, if they ever have doubts about their religion, endeavor to find the truth.

But those who reject all revealed truths, who, knowing the Catholic Church to have been instituted by Christ, refuse to listen to her, who, doubting or not knowing which is the true Church of Christ, neglect to use the proper means of knowing it — Such as those cannot expect to be saved.

Thus we see that to the Catholic who practises his religion, heaven is a certainty. To those outside the Catholic Church, all is uncertain.

Let us, my dear friends, thank God for instituting His Church to guide us and preserve us from being "tossed about by every wind of doctrine." If we are not docile children of His Church, let us ask Him for the grace of immediately becoming so; if we are obedient to all the teachings and laws of the Church, let us thank Him and ask Him for the grace of perseverance in well doing to the end, so that we may receive the crown of everlasting life.

SEPTUAGESIMA SUNDAY

CHRIST — THE ARGUMENT OF OUR FAITH, THE FOUNDATION OF OUR HOPE AND THE MOTIVE OF OUR LOVE

"And the rock was Christ." I Cor. X, 4.

St. Paul, in this epistle, calls Christ the rock from which the Jews derived spiritual power and refreshment. What Christ was to the Jews before His coming He is in a more emphatic manner to Christians. He is not only the divine rock from which our Church receives strength and solidity but He is the argument of our faith, the foundation of our hope and the motive of our love.

I

Christ is the argument of our faith. The first question a person seeking the true religion naturally asks is, who founded it? If the founder was a man, the work is of human origin; but if the founder was God, the work was divine. The founder of our religion, the Catholic religion, was Jesus Christ. This needs no demonstration. For our religion is an historical fact. It is a society which did not spring into being to-day nor yesterday, but

is known and acknowledged as a continuation of one that existed in the last century, in the century preceding that and so on up the stream of time to the age of the Apostles, to its very foundation by Jesus Christ.

Now Jesus Christ was God, for He proved His divinity and strengthened His mission by means of miracles, and a miracle is what God only can do, although He may use others as instruments. In other words, a miracle is a derogation from or suspension of a natural law wrought by a superior power and involving no intrinsic contradiction. All the miracles of Jesus Christ can be easily distinguished both from natural phenomena and from the works of Satan. For example: it is something beyond the natural to raise people from the dead, especially after decomposition has already commenced, and it requires one stronger, more powerful than Satan to drive Satan out from one possessed. No one but God could do such things as these and many others which, according to the Gospel, Jesus performed. But setting aside the Gospel narrative which, even taken historically, unanswerably shows Christ's divinity, the writings as well as the silence of the Jews and Gentiles establish it beyond a doubt. Let it suffice to hear a few sentences from the remarkable history of Josephus, a Jew who lived

about the time of Christ. "But there was at this time," he says, "Jesus a wise man, if it is right to call Him a man. For He was a doer of miraculous works, who on the third day after His death arose and appeared to His disciples as He and other divine prophets had predicted." From the testimony of profane history, then, we see that Christ was no impostor; that He was believed to be more than man, and that this belief was founded on His miracles and especially on His resurrection from the dead. Hence we cannot but conclude that by His miracles, and by His life of humility and abnegation and by the fulfillment in Him of all the prophecies, Jesus Christ showed that He was God. He, who brought the world to revere a cross; He, who held up sufferings and humiliations to the veneration of mankind; He, who overthrew the prevalent notions of morality; He, I repeat, could be no other than God. If the whole world were to oppose Jesus Christ, if philosophy were to combine its powers against His doctrines, all this would fail to show that a religion erected on such a foundation could be a religion of human origin. As Jesus Christ was God, and as God can not deceive us no more than we can deceive Him, we rightly conclude that the religion He founded by means of miracles was from

God. Therefore Jesus Christ is the argument of our faith.

II

As Jesus Christ is the argument of our faith, so is He also the foundation of our hope. He came on earth for the redemption of all. He elevated, ennobled human nature by becoming man. He became the humblest of men for man's happiness. For this His whole life, from the manger at Bethlehem to the cross on Calvary, was a continual passion. And, although one drop of blood, one tear, one sigh of the Man-God, being of infinite value, would have been sufficient to save all mankind, He nevertheless endured all those humiliations, all those sufferings, all those degradations in order to inspire more and more our confidence, our hope.

The merits of the passion of Christ give to our good actions all their efficacy. They give to them the quality of satisfying for our sins and of meriting the rewards of eternal life, so that even a cup of cold water given in His name will be rewarded. Go to the bedside of a dying Catholic, and then you will see who is the foundation of our hope. Let us suppose him to have been a good, faithful Christian. His whole life now passes before him in a

sort of panoramic view. But his good far outweigh his evil deeds, and, relying on Christ's promises, he hopes to obtain eternal life. He now thinks no more of earth, but begins to prepare for eternity. The priest administers the sacraments and consoles him with the thought of the resurrection and immortality. At length, breathing the sweet names of Jesus, Mary and Joseph, he silently passes away from earth and speeds his flight to the heavenly regions of his hope. O! what a beautiful, what a happy death! O! that we all may die such a death! relying on the promises of Jesus Christ, Who is the foundation of our hope.

III

If Christ did nothing more than point out to us a rule of action that will constitute our happiness here and hereafter, thus proving His great love for us, that alone would be sufficient to induce us to love Him. For it is but natural to love those who love us. But He did more. He died for us, who are His enemies. If we admire the dashing young soldier who fearlessly rushes up to the cannon's mouth for the love of family and fatherland; if we honor the generous statesman who makes great sacrifices for his country's welfare; if we venerate the noble martyr who generously gave up his life, his

liberty and his all for God and his fellow Christians: — what ought to be our feelings of admiration, of honor, of veneration, of gratitude, of love for Him Who alone faced the furious rabble, Who sacrificed everything, even His honor, for He was reputed among thieves, Who endured the most poignant sufferings in His terrible agony and horrible crucifixion, and all for us sinful creatures, His enemies? If we love Him, we will keep His commandments. And could there be a more powerful motive of our love than Jesus Christ, who has done so much for us?

Now, my dear friends, from what has been said we may see that none but Jesus Christ could teach the world that faith, hope and love are virtues alike adapted to the educated and ignorant of mankind; that He alone is the argument of our faith, the foundation of our hope and the motive of our love; and that if we believe in God and in Him who was sent, Jesus Christ, and live according to this belief, according to our faith, we may hope, we may have the utmost confidence that we will enjoy His love for an endless eternity.

SEXAGESIMA SUNDAY

MAMMON AND GOD

"And that which fell among thorns are they who have heard, and, going their way, are choked with the cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and yield no fruit." LUKE VIII, 14.

The things of this life, its cares and riches and pleasures, draw many people away from God.

To use things rightly we must know their value. We cannot know the value of things, unless we have a knowledge of their nature. Here, in this world, our knowledge is imperfect; it is confined principally to worldly things and passes slightingly over heavenly things for which we were created. We spend our time in amassing great wealth, in seeking pleasure, in gaining renown; while we seldom, if ever, give a thought to God. We think too much of our good looks, our beautiful houses, our fine farms, our golden grain, our glossy coated animals, our bank account; and too little of God. We cannot serve both. We cannot serve Mammon, i. e., the things of this world, and God too.

I

The great majority of mankind live forgetful of God. They live as though eternity were far off. They center their thoughts and affections on the things of this world. Many are avaricious. They love Mammon; hence cannot love God. Being avaricious, they grow mean and cruel. Scratching and scraping for a "little more" they starve and pinch themselves to heap up riches, to get more land, and, when they get it, they die before enjoying it. With hearts of flint they deprive their families of many necessaries and comforts in order to satisfy their love of money. Worth thousands of dollars, they yearly contribute but a mite to the support of God's church and then grumble because they have to give any or because asked to give more. To them this world is everything the next world nothing. Their thoughts are of time with its fleeting treasures and pleasures; they forget eternity with its everlasting rewards and punishments. They think of God, if at all, but one hour a week, while the remainder of the time is given to Mammon.

They teach their children to calculate, but not to pray; send them to schools where they are taught arithmetic, but not religion. Regardless of their morals, they leave them a fortune, thinking that it

will be time enough to attend to religion when they grow up. The man who acts that way is about as wise as is the farmer who would allow his field to lie neglected in the spring and to grow up with weeds and briers, believing that in the summer it will be time enough to sow the good seed. Youth is the spring time. If the good seed is not sown then, bad, sinful habits and other weeds and briers gain a foothold and will hardly, if ever, be eradicated.

O eternity! how few there are who think of thee, who provide for thee! Yet we know this life is short. Our powers will fail us, our senses wax dull, our riches leave us, and the world that we now think so much about will, at last, cast us off. We will have to go to a strange place, and are we ready?

One of the saints tells us, that there was once a large and populous country where the custom prevailed of choosing as governor a stranger who knew nothing about the people and their laws. This person was permitted to do as he pleased, and, thinking he would reign as long as he lived, he, of course, had a good time. At the end of a year, however, the people would seize the governor, strip him of everything and banish him to an island, where, not having wherewith to feed or clothe himself, he suffered extreme pain and misery. Without any warn-

ing, his riches suddenly changed into poverty, and his joy into sadness.

Once this people elected a prudent and sensible man. Having heard of the wicked custom of the people, he did not grow proud and haughty with the new dignity conferred upon him, but began to send supplies of everything necessary to sustain life to the island so that when banished there he would not, like his predecessors, die of hunger and exposure.

This is what passes in the world, and a wise, prudent and sensible man will act as did the prudent and sensible governor.

The country is the world wherein, when we think we reign, we are suddenly stripped of all we have and sent to the grave.

While enjoying transitory pleasures without thinking of the eternal, we are suddenly cut short in our career.

Is not he wise, sensible, prudent, who, knowing that he is to be deprived of all he has in this world, provides for the next by good works — works of penance, alms deeds, charity, prayer?

Is not he wise who despises the temporal for the sake of the eternal, who serves not Mammon but God?

II

How vain, then, are the things of this world. How little when compared with things eternal. What is all the fame, honor, renown, wealth, happiness of this world when compared with eternal joys?

The riches of heaven are as great as its joys and its honors. There can be no greater riches than to possess every good, to have every want satisfied. To the blessed in heaven no good is wanting, no desire is unsatisfied. They possess their God, the author of every good, the creator of all things precious. Whatever is good, whatever is beautiful, whatever is precious in heaven and on earth was made by Him. He made the grand old ocean with its waves mountain high and with its white winged fleets; He created the earth with its varied beauty, with its ancient forests, its majestic rivers, its pine clad hills, its crystal lakes, its laughing waterfalls, limpid streams and blooming valleys; He multiplies a thousand-fold the seed we sow; He gives increase to our domestic animals. He gave to the human body its beauty and symmetry; to the mind its intelligence and power. He created the angels so perfect, so bright, so beautiful that they have at times been mistaken by the saints for God Himself.

He gave them and He gave us whatever is good, intelligent, noble, beautiful, loving and perfect in us.

God could not have created this beautiful world with its magnificent mountains reaching to the sky; He could not have made the sun, the moon and the millions of stars, some of them many times larger than this earth, with all their riches and treasures; He could not have brought into existence angels and men with all their goodness, loveliness, knowledge and perfection; He could not, I say, have imparted to these various objects of His creation the beauty and perfections they exhibit, if He Himself were not the unfailing source of goodness, beauty and perfections.

Since God is the source of all that is good, of all that is precious, of all that is beautiful, of all that is lasting, of all that is perfect, is he not foolish who does not love Him? Is he not foolish who loves the gift more than the giver? If a man gave us a gold watch or a horse, would we not love the giver more than the gift? He is the end and aim of our existence. Let us not act as though we expected our reward in this world. The majority act so. They serve Mammon, not God. All the evils existing in the world can be reduced to this. What is the labor trouble, but a result of love of Mammon? Those in authority want too much.

Let us, my dear friends, frequently recall to mind the fact that we have here no lasting dwelling place — that we are here to-day and to-morrow are no more; let us embrace poverty, if by it we are drawn to God; let us despise riches if, loving them too much, they withdraw us from Him. We are travelling towards heaven: that is the end of the journey we have undertaken. If we were going to Europe, we would be careful to take a safe vessel.

Let us also take a sure way, a safe vessel for heaven. And believe me, my dear friends, there is none safer, none more secure, none more certain to land you safe in heaven's harbor than the vessel that carries detestation for the goods, the riches, the pleasures of this world and love for the only good — the source of all good, God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY

REASON AND FAITH

"Thy faith hath made thee whole." LUKE XVIII, 42.

If there is one thing more than another characteristic of the present time, it is lack of faith. A spirit of incredulity pervades everywhere. We are

too apt to deny the existence of all that cannot be seen by our own eyes, heard by our own ears, or touched by ourselves. And yet, we must believe some things on the testimony of others. We believe that Rome, Paris and London exist, though we never saw them. We believe on the testimony of others that such historical characters existed as Washington, Napoleon and Julius Cæsar.

We accept some things, then, on the authority of others. We do not doubt that Napoleon was defeated at Waterloo; that Columbus discovered America; or, that Cæsar conquered Gaul; although these events happened years before we were born.

But, in religious matters, many doubt everything. They resemble Thomas, to whom Our Lord said "Because thou hast seen, Thomas, thou hast believed. Blessed are they who have not seen but have believed."

I

Many suppose that reason is capable of solving all questions. Rejecting revelation, they tell us that reason unaided is sufficient to guide us through all the trials of this life and prepare us for the next. A little study and a moment's reflection would teach them the absurdity and falsity of such a position.

Before the coming of our Saviour, reason held

sway. The result was, that the most abominable vices existed, were considered right and reasonable; that vices, and crimes were honored as gods; and that the most serious errors existed concerning the most important questions. Nothing could be more important and interesting to man than a proper knowledge of the nature and providence of God, of the origin of the world, of man's duty to God, of man's origin, of his destiny and of the causes of the evils surrounding him.

The best pagan philosophers of antiquity knew little of these questions. They worshipped everything except God, who alone is to be worshipped and adored. They paid divine honors to the sun, moon and stars. They worshipped the sea, the river and the forest. They even worshipped vices and crimes and had idols built to their honor.

Every pagan city was filled with temples which were adorned with idols erected to their false gods. Such was the case everywhere, except in Palestine. Instead of praying to the one true and only God and placing confidence in divine Providence, the Pagans, relying upon unaided reason, had recourse to lying oracles, fortune-tellers and the interpretation of dreams in order to ascertain their destiny.

Some of these philosophers it is true, believed in one God, but were confused in their teachings

concerning Him. They had no definite knowledge to impart.

Similar was the case regarding the origin of the world. Aristotle taught that it was eternal. Others were of the opinion that it was formed by accident, while some said that it was an emanation from or a portion of the divinity.

Reason met with no better success in teaching man's duty, origin and destiny. Since it knew nothing definite of God, it could have no certain knowledge of man's duty to God. Nor could it tell whence man came or whither he was going. All these important questions were enveloped in impenetrable darkness. It is no wonder they took a gloomy view of life. Without a true knowledge of God here, they had no hope in a hereafter. Doubt and despair existed everywhere. Few, if any, had a belief in a future state. Many of the greatest philosophers not only taught but put in practise self-destruction as an act of virtue.

Since the greatest of ancient or modern philosophers, relying on unaided reason could at most point out a probability of a future state; since they had but a vague idea of God and man's duties towards Him; since they could tell nothing of the origin of this world or of man, there exists a necessity of a divine revelation to teach us of God,

of the origin of the world, and of that invisible country which is destined to receive the souls of men after their separation from the body.

II

For reason could not guide us safely through the wilderness of this life. It could not lead us to the promised land that lies beyond. Reason can find out some truths, as, for example, the existence of God. But there are certain truths that the deepest intellect of man could never fathom. Hence the necessity of revelation.

Revelation has been given. God's teaching, the cross of Christ, was a stumbling-block to the Jew, but to the educated, the rationalistic Greek, it was folly, as it still is to those who make a god of reason.

Reason, then as now, wished to subject everything to its measure; and when its measure could reach no farther, it was sure it had measured Infinity, God Himself. It is the finite measuring the infinite; poor, weak, helpless human reason declaring itself the judge of eternal reason.

The proper office of reason is to examine whether God has spoken to man; when it finds that God has spoken then its duty is to believe the word of God, even if it is incomprehensible. God can do

many things man cannot understand. Hence when we know on good authority that God has taught or done certain things, we must believe them although we do not understand them.

St. Paul tells us in his Epistle to the Hebrews "Without faith it is impossible to please God." Words could not be clearer. No matter what you do, pray night and day; keep holy the Lord's day with precision; commit the Scriptures to memory; be kind to your parents; love your neighbor; be just — honorable and honest; be charitable to the poor; be pure in thought, word and deed; perform various acts of piety; still, you are not pleasing to Almighty God unless you have faith.

"Without faith it is impossible to please God." Faith is the foundation of all virtue. We must have it first, else the building will fall.

Faith is a divine virtue by which we believe all that God teaches because He can neither deceive nor be deceived.

Faith differs from human credence which we give to the word of man. Christian faith is based on the infallible word of God. It enkindles in the soul perfect certitude. It is infused into the soul in Baptism and is a supernatural light added to the natural light of reason.

We believe because Christ who taught is God.

He proved his divinity and established His mission by means of prophecies and miracles. These prophecies and miracles are historical facts. They rest on at least as good authority as does any well-founded historical fact and cannot be denied without overturning all history. No one but God can perform a miracle. Jesus Christ proved His divinity and the divinity of His teaching by the performance of many miracles, as, for example, the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead and His own resurrection.

Reason, then, teaches us that Jesus Christ was God. Genuine reason also teaches that when God teaches anything we must believe because He cannot deceive us.

We believe that Christ is God, because He fulfilled the prophecies and performed many miracles. We believe all He taught because He is God. He cannot mislead us. He gave us His revelation, not to extinguish reason, but assist it. Reason leads us to the door of the true Church of God. Is the Catholic Church the Church Christ established upon earth?

This is a fact that reason can find out. There is no reason why Cæsar should have conquered Gaul nearly two thousand years ago, nor is there any reason why Napoleon should have died in exile on

St. Helena during the century just passed. Still, to doubt these things would be most unreasonable, because they are based on such authority that to deny it would be to overturn all historical certitude.

If we have such certainty with regard to these human events, how much greater is our certainty regarding the superhuman events related of Christ, His Apostles and their successors.

These are within the domain of reason. The testimony to the fact is what we examine.

That Christ lived upon earth, that He performed many wonderful works, that His miracles proved Him to be God, that He chose twelve Apostles, that after His death He sent them into the world to teach His Gospel to every creature, that some of His Apostles and disciples, years after His death, embodied part of His teachings in the Gospels, epistles and other writings which we call the New Testament, that the church which He founded to lead men to heaven was to continue till the end of time according to His promise that the Holy Ghost would teach her all truth and that He Himself would abide with her forever, and that this Church has never ceased for the past eighteen hundred years to lead souls to heaven by teaching Christ's doctrines pure and undefiled — these are well known, well founded

historical facts, which the reason of any man, whose mind is not darkened by the thick clouds of passion and prejudice, can find out without the shadow of a doubt.

Thus we see that reason will lead us to the door of the true Church. It will teach us that Jesus Christ is God, that He founded a Church to last forever and that there is only one Church which comes down to us through the lapse of ages from the time of Christ.

Although reason will lead one to the door of the true Church, it requires a special grace of God to lead one to enter its sacred portals. This grace is sometimes rejected.

III

Thus we see that we can do nothing without God. Faith in God and His teachings is a necessity. Jesus Christ is the light that came into the world to enlighten its darkness. Instead of rejecting that light as many do, all should turn towards it with joy and gladness. The truth He preached came from heaven; hence, all should cheerfully accept it. How different was the fact. Even in the time of Christ, the Jews loved darkness better than light. The Jews and heathens did everything to oppose His teachings. When He spoke of His divinity,

they said He was a blasphemer. When He said He was of the same nature as the Father and that He was older than Abraham, they sought to stone Him. When He spoke to them of the Bread of Eternal Life, and announced that He was about to institute the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, they said it was impossible, and many even of His disciples withdrew from Him.

They denied many of His miracles. Those that it was impossible for them to deny (as they were well authenticated facts), they tried to explain or attribute to some evil power.

If, then, Our Divine Lord was despised when He was on earth and His teachings denied, is it any wonder that His Church, the teacher of nations, should be despised and her teachings denied at the present day?

Irreligion is fashionable, incredulity tempting. Many are governed by fashion. Without examining for themselves, they imitate in their words and actions those with whom they associate. They want to be popular. And they foolishly think that the road to popularity is the denial of the religion of Christ, and the doubting of everything in religious matters.

Some hopefully look forward to a better day when all will be united in the bonds of a common

Christian brotherhood. They think that the spirit of doubt and denial has about run its course; that men are beginning to see the fallacy of the principle of private interpretation from which this universal doubt and denial springs; and that the idolatry of man's individual reason must at last give place to the divine authority of faith.

We have seen the proper office of reason. We have seen that when it is abused, it leads to the most abominable doctrines and practices, as in the case of the pagan of antiquity and the infidel of to-day; but that when properly used, when used as the handmaid of faith, it leads to God.

There are some truths that man by his reason alone can find out, as, for example, the existence of God and the spirituality of the soul. But there are other truths that the deepest intellect of man could never fathom, as the truth that God, the Creator and Lord of all things is one in essence and three in person and that the soul being immortal is destined to live forever happy or miserable according to its works.

These and other truths required a special revelation of God and an act of faith on our part. God has revealed them. Reason teaches that we must believe them.

They are of the utmost importance, not only for

our future, but also for our present life. For, if God created us, we are creatures of God and owe Him love, veneration and adoration.

Hence, the great commandment "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind," which is the source of so much good and so many blessings among Christians, was never thought of by the Pagans or the philosopher of antiquity.

He was likewise ignorant of the second great command, which is like unto the first. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Hence, we witness their cruel barbarity, their indifference to human suffering, their terrible treatment of prisoners, women, children and slaves. These were the results of the abuse of reason in matters relating to religion. It was not until the time of the first Christian Emperor, Constantine, that they and many other cruel, heartless, horrible, heathenish practices were declared illegal and contrary to Christian principles.

Regarding the soul's immortality, reason is equally uncertain. Philosophy and reason of antiquity affirmed that the soul was spiritual or immaterial, i. e., not composed of matter, and, hence, unlike the body, not subject to decay or dissolution.

Still, it was but an opinion, weak and wavering. It was unlike the faith, the confidence firm and immovable which revelation gives.

It was far different from the Christian's Credo, "I believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting."

Reason, then, is not that light which is to guide us through darkness of the valley of life to the promised land that lies beyond. It was uncertain, weak and wavering. We needed a guide that was certain, strong and unwavering. We needed revelation. That has been given. Reason teaches us that God has spoken to man. And when man knows that God speaks, genuine reason dictates that man humbly bow his head and believe the word of God.

Reason is to seek the light of revelation and follow its guidance when found. Reason can prayerfully weigh the evidences of revelation, and that God who said "Ask and you shall receive" will grant the gift of faith. Anything that is not revealed, true reason can deal with as she pleases. She can question or reject it. But when reason once knows a truth is revealed, when she once sees a teaching is unchangeable, infallible and divine; then that teaching claims her assent and submission. Then it becomes an object of faith.

Let us, my dear friends, use our reason properly. Let us endeavor, at all times, to be able to give a reason for the faith that is in us. And let us firmly believe all the truths that God has revealed, for though they may be above reason, they are not contrary to it, and that God who has revealed them can not deceive us.

THE FIRST SUNDAY IN LENT

MORTIFICATION

"Be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting and in weeping and in mourning." JOEL II, 12.

These words of the Prophet Joel indicate the spirit of mortification that should animate the Christian during the time of Lent. This holy season, as you all know, has been set apart by the Church as a time of penance in order to appease the justice of the infinite God for the insults offered Him by our past sins. Penance is a duty which binds all sinners since the sin of Adam: and is a condition absolutely necessary to salvation. This our Saviour clearly taught when he said, "Unless you shall do penance you shall all likewise perish." St. Luke XIII, 30. The principal works of penance are

prayer, alms giving, fasting and abstinence. These we should observe at all times, but especially and particularly during this season. The second precept of the Church tells us to fast and abstain on the days appointed by the Church.

I am fully aware of the fact that it is a difficult thing to fast. It is not easy for anyone. But if it were easy, then it would not be a penance, a mortification, and the law of penance so necessary to salvation would not be fulfilled. Although it is hard, it will be still harder to hear those words of condemnation "Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire." (St. Matt. XXV, 41.)

This manner of penance has been practised by the saints in all ages and is sanctified by the example of Jesus Christ; it is moreover a powerful means to quench our passions and satisfy the justice of God for our sins.

I

The whole life of Jesus Christ from the stable of Bethlehem to Calvary's Cross was a continual passion, mortification, sacrifice. The lives of His followers should be fashioned after their Divine model. "If any man will come after me," He says, "let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." (St. Matt. XVI, 24.) The Catholic Church alone

teaches and always has taught the duty of mortification. With St. Paul she teaches that to be sharers in the Redemption we must "be nailed to the Cross of Christ" and chastise our bodies and bring them into subjection.

The disciple is not above his Master, and it is not becoming that the path of the disciple should be covered with roses while that of the Master was strewed with thorns and sprinkled with His own Precious Blood.

All the saints of God understood this doctrine well and walked the narrow and thorny path "which leadeth to life." (St. Matt. VII, 14.) St. John the Baptist, the precursor of Our Lord as is well known, led a life of penance and mortification. He was "in the desert," "was clothed with camel's hair, and a leather girdle about his loins, and he ate locusts and wild honey." (St. Mark I, 4, 6.) There is not a saint, not an inhabitant of heaven, who did not during life perform works of penance and mortification unless he died in innocent infancy. This doctrine of penance in atonement of our sins caused the Church to establish the forty days fast of Lent in commemoration of the forty days fast of Our Lord. It has been observed from the time of the Apostles, as we learn from St. Jerome who says, "According to the Apostolic Tradition, at the

proper season of the year we observe Lent." This doctrine filled the deserts and monasteries with holy persons who fled from the vain pleasures of the world to mortify themselves in solitude; and it encouraged the martyrs to shed their blood, to die for Christ and with Him. And do we expect to go to heaven by any other road than that pointed out to us by the example and teaching of Jesus Christ and of the saints of all ages? If we do, we are sadly in error and the sooner we disabuse ourselves of such an error the better. Are we purer, holier, godlier than St. John the Baptist and St. Paul were? Have we less need to "work out our salvation with fear and trembling?"

II

The saints mortified themselves in order to obtain strength to conquer their passions and to satisfy the justice of God for their sins. "I chastise my body" says St. Paul (I Cor. IX, 27), "and bring it into subjection; lest, perhaps, when I have preached to others, I, myself, should become a castaway." Have we no passions to conquer, no sins to expiate? It is not enough for a sinner to quit his evil ways, to reform his life. Atonement must be made for sins committed. If true penance consisted in offending God no more, then the sinner who died un-

repentant would be saved; for he has ceased offending God. But something more is required. When we have offended or injured a neighbor, we should not only cease injuring him, but we should repair the injury done. If we have stolen or cheated we must not only do so no more, but we must also make restitution to the person wronged. So, when we have offended God, true conversion consists in not only ceasing to offend Him but also in making reparation for the insults offered Him. If the eye has gazed on improper objects, if the tongue has been guilty of detraction, calumny, blasphemous or immodest language, they must not only be restrained for the future from those sinful liberties, but reparation must be made to God by works of penance — by fasting, by prayer and other works of mortification.

Thus King David, although assured by the prophet Nathan that his sin was forgiven, never ceased to do penance. Thus St. Peter did penance. Tradition says he wept bitterly at the remembrance of his sin whenever he thought of having denied his Master.

The spirit of Calvary, the spirit of the true disciple of Christ, is a spirit of self-denial and mortification. The spirit of the world is a spirit of self-indulgence and fleeting pleasure.

Let us not forget that although by the atonement Jesus Christ has paid the price of our redemption and provided ample means for the salvation of all, still, salvation is not absolute; it is conditional, and depends upon our own co-operation.

Our Blessed Saviour taught, and His Church ever teaches, that the merits of the atonement are applied only to those who strive earnestly, with the grace of God, to imitate Christ, in His spirit, in His life and in His death. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

If there had been anything more beneficial to man's salvation than patient suffering, be assured, Christ and His saints would have shown it both by word and example.

Can we seriously ponder the merits of suffering and not resolve to suffer, to mortify ourselves, especially during this holy season of Lent? Can we think of the advantages of the cross and not be resolved to receive hereafter crosses from the hands of Jesus and endure whatever He pleases, since to suffer in a proper manner is absolutely necessary for salvation?

St. John the Baptist began his mission with the words, "Do penance for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (St. Matt. III, 2.) Christ after him

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said "Unless you do penance, you shall all likewise perish." And in the name and authority of Christ and of his Church I preach the same to you today. Think on it; act on it. "Unless you do penance you shall perish."

THE SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

CHRIST — HIS GREATNESS AND GOODNESS

"This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." St. Matt. XVII, 5.

If the principal duty of man is to love and serve God, the principal duty of the Christian is to know and imitate Christ. This knowledge may be obtained in a supernatural and in a natural manner.

We obtain a knowledge of Christ in a supernatural way by prayer, by meditation and by devotion to the Sacred Heart, to the Blessed Sacrament and to the Blessed Mother of Christ; while we obtain a knowledge of Him in a natural way from the Gospels and the epistles of St. Paul.

I

When reading the history of our Redeemer as contained in the Gospels we cannot but be impressed

by His wonderful greatness and amiability. Compared with Him, all the great heroes and philosophers of ancient and modern times sink into insignificance.

Wisdom is undoubtedly the first endowment which would entitle a man to be called great. Every action of our Redeemer was a dictate of wisdom. Everything He said bore its impression, and hence the enemies of Christianity can find no flaw in His life and doctrine. What stronger proof of wisdom could there be? We will notice a few particular instances. What depth of wisdom is there not embodied in that celebrated prayer, the Our Father, which without study He poured from His lips, and which in a few words combines all the wants of all men? It is so simple as to be level to the lowest intellect, and so sublime as to outreach the loftiest.

On a certain occasion, the Pharisees having carefully prepared to entrap Him sent their disciples to Him saying: "Master, we know that thou art a true speaker and teachest the way of God in truth and dost not care for any man. Tell us, therefore, what dost thou think? Is it lawful to give tribute to Cæsar or not?"

See the studied cunning of the shrewd Pharisees. If He answers, "Yes," He becomes an enemy to the

Jews who did not wish to pay Roman taxes. If He answers "No," they will charge Him with opposition to public authority. There seems to be no refuge from the alternative. An ancient philosopher would have required time for the solution. But Our Redeemer said "'Show me the coin of the tribute.' And they offered him a penny. But Jesus saith to them: 'Whose image and inscription is this?' They say to him: 'Cæsar's.' Then he saith to them: 'Render, therefore, to Cæsar, the things which are Cæsar's, and to God the things which are God's.' And when they heard this they wondered, and leaving him, went their way."

Observe how beautifully Our Redeemer in these few, wise words silences His enemies and at the same time gives us a most useful moral lesson, namely, to give everyone his due.

Another mark of greatness is individual power. While with His disciples in a vessel on the lake of Genesareth "a great tempest arose in the sea so that the ship was covered with waves; but he was asleep." Imagine you are on the sea; a storm arises; the winds rage in all their fury; the waves roll mountain high and break against the vessel, threatening to bury it in the deep; the heavens add their terror by terrific peals of thunder and frightful flashes of lightning. In the midst of all this

Jesus, as if unconscious, sleeps. The frightened Apostles rouse Him and He "rebuked the wind and said to the sea, 'Peace, be still,' . . . and there came a great calm." Who would not have been amazed at such a sight! "The men wondered saying, what manner of man is this? for the winds and the sea obey Him."

We have other instances of His power in His many miracles and especially in the raising of Lazarus from the dead after he had been four days in the tomb.

II

But Our Redeemer was as amiable and good as He was great. He was kind and affable to all ranks and conditions. He was even called the friend of sinners. Witness His kindness to the public sinner who with a contrite heart cast herself at His feet.

See with what goodness He receives little children. He said: "Suffer little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." He was charitable to all and at all times. But the greatest, the sublime act of charity and manifestation of His goodness consists in the shedding of His blood for man's redemption. "Greater love than this," He says, "no man has, that he give up his life for his fellowman."

Jesus Christ gave up His life for you and for me. For this wonderful goodness we should love Him, as for His greatness we should admire Him.

From His wonderful manifestations of greatness and goodness we cannot but see that Christ is more than man. Hence, while admiring Him on account of His greatness and loving Him for His goodness we are ready to fall down in adoration before Him even before His heavenly Father tells us, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT

THE DIVINITY OF THE CHURCH

"Be ye therefore followers of God. EPHES. V, 1.

If there is one thing more than another noticeable in the character of the average man it is inconsistency. If he has not sound principles to guide him, every touch of passion, pleasure, or human respect is sure to change his vacillating position. This being true in general, is much more frequently the case in matters of religion.

Persons who are considered good Christians, while lauding the benefits of the Church and its sound moral teachings, may sometimes complain

of its rigors and its strict adherence to principle; while on the other hand, it has been said time and again that the Church is a great imposition.

They say that its wonderful constitution, durability and teaching serve to increase its powers of imposing on the people. Its enemies, acknowledging its marvelous superstructure and influence, persist in calling it an imposition. Nothing can be more inconsistent. For there is no truth that can be proved with more certainty than the divinity of the Catholic Church. If divine, it is not an imposition.

The wonderful constitution, the indestructible existence and the sublime code of faith and morals of the Catholic Church, instead of increasing its powers of imposing on the people, unanswerably prove its divinity.

I

In order to see that its wonderful constitution is an unanswerable argument for the divinity of the Church, we have but to recall a few well-known facts. About nineteen hundred years ago, there appeared among the oldest people in the world an historical personage, a Great Prophet. His words and acts are known to all. That Christ really did exist; that He taught "as one having authority"; that He chose disciples; that some of those disciples

wrote books, these are facts that cannot be denied by anyone who believes in anything at all.

It is easy to see that the history of the miracles and good works of Christ contained in the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John is, at least, as true as that recorded by any profane historian. If we look into the world we see that about five hundred millions of the most enlightened people in existence profess belief in the Gospel truths and miracles. If we go back to the time of Christ, we find the same in every age and every clime.

When the Evangelists wrote, the facts narrated were recent. Witnesses of the miracles recorded by them were still living. They could easily be contradicted, if not true. But instead of contradicting, the very Pagans and Jews show by their silence as well as by their words that "Indeed this Man, this Founder of the Catholic Religion, was the Son of God," and these facts cannot be denied. Let us imagine, for a moment, that some poor, ignorant Samoan fishermen should suddenly appear in our midst, preaching a new doctrine. Suppose they would tell us they were disciples of a God who had appeared, taught, performed miracles and sent them to continue His mission; that they had embodied His principal teachings in a book; that, among

other difficult things, we were commanded to have no inordinate affection for earthly things, to love our enemies, to do good to those who injure us and to follow their teachings or be eternally lost. Suppose still further that we were heathen. What would we do in such a case?

Before leaving everything to which our hearts inclined, would we not examine carefully into all the details and circumstances of this new Teacher, of his teachings and his miracles? Most assuredly we would. Yes. And so did the people in the time of the Apostles. Aye! There were great and learned men of that time, as there are of to-day, who denied the possibility of miracles, as they were against reason. But when they became ocular witnesses of manifest miracles, then the fact first dawned upon their darkened intellects that there was a supernatural as well as a natural order and that to be above man's reason was not the same thing as to be against it. Then followed that spiritual revolution which regenerated the world and in a short time spread the Gospel to every nation. Allured by no temporal advantage, undaunted by the prospect of ignominy, conquered by no other force than that of truth, the Jew and Gentile, the Greek and the Barbarian, meekly bend their necks to the yoke of Christ and follow a crucified God. When

reflecting on these facts; when considering that to follow Christ was to lose everything in the beginning of Christianity and often even life itself, then we must with St. Augustine conclude "Either the Catholic Church was constituted, propagated by means of miracles or it was not. If it was, it is divine, as no one but God can perform or authorize a miracle. If it was not, it is divine; for such a rapid propagation of truths so repugnant to the natural inclinations of man would be the greatest of all miracles."

In either case, the wonderful constitution of the Catholic Church unanswerably proves its divinity.

II

The divinity of the Church, which is plainly seen in its constitution, appears in even a clearer light in its very existence.

When we recall to mind the many bloody persecutions she has undergone; when we remember the terrible invasions of the northern barbarians; when we reflect on the fearful assaults of the heretics and wicked emperors who tried in vain to destroy her, then we cannot but see that the hand that guides her is divine. All the powers of earth and hell have ever been waged against her; still she stands. No human institution could survive half so much.

During her existence nations have been dissolved; governments have crumbled; thrones have been burst asunder; tyrants have arisen, attained their eminence and fallen; while she, having passed through more trials than all combined, remains unchanged and unchangeable.

The bright summer sun that rises in the far east and traces his course through the blue sky until he sinks in the distant west never shone with a clearer, a purer, a godlier light than does the Catholic Church of to-day. What she is to-day, such she always has been and always shall be until the rivers of time are swallowed up in the gulf of Eternity. Time and trouble leave no trace upon her. From Peter, who defied the threats of the Pagan Emperor and said "It is better to obey God than man," down to his illustrious successor Pius X, the glory of his age, there has been a long list of renowned martyrs, glorious confessors, bishops, priests and people who gave their lives, their liberty and their all in proof of the divinity of the Catholic Church.

Like her founder, she has her Good Friday and her Easter Sunday, her sorrows and her joys. And although she is still calumniated, still persecuted, she has nothing to fear; for He has promised that the "gates of hell shall never prevail against her."

III

It now remains to examine how the doctrines of the Church show her to be divine. It is a fact, which all will admit, that a religion which teaches truths of faith and morals worthy of God, and not only worthy of God but also most useful to man, must be divine. But the Catholic Church teaches truths of faith and morals worthy of God and most useful to man. Therefore the Catholic Church is divine. The dogmas of faith taught by the Catholic Church contain the most exalted notions of God and man as well as the most stupendous mysteries which man could never know without God's assistance. The Church teaches that man by his reason can find out the existence of God, the rewarder of good and the punisher of evil.

The harmony of the works of nature will convince him of this. The admirable revolutions of stars and planets and comets in different periods and various orbits without interruption or disorder show it. All the works of nature proclaim a Deity.

But although man by his reason could find out the existence of God and the spirituality of the soul; there are truths that the deepest intellect of man could never fathom. Hence the Church teaches that God has revealed certain truths, such as the im-

mortality of the soul, which is made to God's image and destined for eternal happiness with the blessed in heaven; the mysteries of the most holy Trinity, of the Incarnation and the Blessed Sacrament, by which the God of Justice and Charity is ever with us to soothe our cares and answer our prayers.

The moral teaching of the Church contains the most sublime idea of morality and perfection which consists principally in the imitation of God. "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect." The Catholic Church teaches, as Christ taught when on earth, mortification, poverty, humility and self-denial; it teaches that we owe a debt of adoration to God on account of His omnipotence, of gratitude for His benefits, and of love for His providence; it teaches too, that we must live in justice and peace and charity with all mankind and die in the hope of a life beyond the grave.

A Church teaching doctrines which are so sublime, both in faith and morals, must be more than human, must be divine. Hence Pagans in the first centuries of the Church admired and embraced the Christian religion and Christian virtues. In every age they have been the cause of many conversions, drawing high encomiums from even infidel philosophers.

Now, my dear friends, if the Church is divine; if, as we have seen, its constitution, formation, propagation, clearly shows its divinity; if its very existence is an unanswerable argument for it; if its admirable code of faith and morals proves beyond the shadow of a doubt its divine origin and protection — it follows as a necessary consequence that whenever the Church asks us to do anything or believe anything we must unhesitatingly do or believe it. For when the Church speaks, God speaks; and when God speaks we must humbly bow and say "My God, not as I will but as Thou wilt." By so doing we will be putting in practise the words of my text in to-day's epistle "Be ye therefore followers of God."

THE FOURTH SUNDAY IN LENT

MIRACLES

"A great multitude followed him because they saw the miracles he did on them that were diseased." St. John VI, 2.

In the Gospel of to-day we have recorded one of the many miracles performed by our Divine Lord while upon earth. His whole life was a mission of mercy. He cured the sick, gave sight to the

blind, hearing to the deaf and raised the dead to life. "He went about doing good." What a glorious example for us to follow! We, too, should do all the good in our power. In none of His acts, in none of His miracles did He more clearly show His divinity and at the same time the god-like quality of His mercy than in the miracle of the loaves and fishes.

I

After having performed many good works, Jesus went into a ship and sailed across the sea of Galilee or Tiberias. "A great multitude followed Him because they saw the miracles which He did on them that were diseased."

Jesus, going out of the ship, saw the large number of people who were following Him and had compassion on them because they were as sheep without a shepherd. He received them, went up to the mountain and taught them many things. He spoke to them of the kingdom of God and healed them that needed healing.

The people were so intent upon seeking the kingdom of God and His justice that they neglected to provide food for their nourishment. They found the kingdom of God, and this nourishment did not fail them.

Although there were about five thousand men besides women and children in the multitude and although there were only five loaves of bread and two fishes with which to feed them, Jesus by His Almighty power so increased the bread and fishes that all this vast multitude not only had sufficient to eat but that twelve baskets were gathered up of the fragments that were left after all had eaten. For "Jesus took the five loaves and two fishes and looking up to heaven he blessed them; He then broke the loaves and gave them to his disciples to set before them that were set down. In like manner also he divided the two fishes among them all as much as they could eat."

"They did all eat and were filled." Such is the simple language in which the Evangelist John narrates the history of this great miracle of the God-man. Of course, as Catholics and Christians, we accept this Book as inspired, and we also accept as true everything contained in it.

But even if it were not inspired it is at least a history. And, using the same tests of its truth and authenticity as we would of any other history, we arrive at the conclusion that the facts narrated in it are true.

II

But there are some in our days who do not believe in miracles. They are repugnant to reason, they say. There were some, too, in the time of Our Lord who did not believe in them, as they thought them contrary to reason. But when they became witnesses of such manifest miracles as the multiplication of the five loaves by which the five thousand hungry people were fed, then the thought dawned upon their darkened intellects that to be above reason was not the same thing as to be against it and that there is a supernatural, as well as a natural, order.

Those who reject miracles, deny God. They admit only the natural. They say truly there are no miracles in nature. But if we admit a God — and certainly any one of reason could soon convince himself of this fact by viewing the order in nature — we must also admit a supernatural order and the possibility of miracles.

A miracle is a derogation from, or a suspension of, a natural law, wrought by a superior power and involving no intrinsic contradiction. God made the laws of nature. Who doubts His power to suspend one of those laws if it were pleasing to Him?

For example, He made a law that fire burns.

Could He not on occasions suspend that law as He did when He preserved from burning the three children who were cast into the fiery furnace? According to another natural law, a body heavier than water will sink to the bottom when placed in it. Could not that law be suspended as it was when Our Divine Lord walked on the water?

Again, according to the natural law, those five loaves of bread could feed but a few persons. But could not He who every year multiplies for you a hundred and a thousand-fold the grain of wheat or corn that is put into the ground also multiply a thousand-fold those five loaves of bread?

That He really did so we have the testimony of reliable eyewitnesses.

We do not require a miracle to prove a miracle as some foolishly and sophistically assert. For a miracle, as soon as it is performed, is a fact. It is perceptible to the senses; is seen to be above the laws of nature; and is testified to, just as is any other fact, by the word or writing of reliable witnesses.

Those who deny miracles do not deny the truth of other facts in the Gospel that are not miraculous. And yet the authenticity and truth of all parts are equally certain. Even the Pagans and Jews of those days admitted the truth of miracles.

Josephus, a Jew of the time of Christ, and one who always remained a Jew, speaks in his history of the death and resurrection of Christ and other miracles. Christian writers of all ages have testified to the existence of miracles.

To deny the testimony of these eyewitnesses is to deny all history. It cannot be done without sapping the foundations not only of history but of Christianity.

The facts that Christ lived upon earth over eighteen hundred years ago, that He taught, that He chose disciples, that He cured the sick, raised dead to life, died, arose again from the dead and performed other miracles are as true and based upon as solid a foundation as are facts that Napoleon Bonaparte lived one hundred years ago, and that after a series of successes he met his defeat at Waterloo.

The principal lessons to be learned from to-day's Gospel are to have a more lively faith in God, in His power and in His miracles; and not to be too solicitous after the things of this world but to seek rather "the kingdom of God and His justice and all other things will be added unto you."

ST. PATRICK

The history of the world is the history of its great men. These men, the world's heroes, accomplished much for humanity. Leaders in great works they have been placed before us as models for our imitation and adulation. Not only the world, in general, but every nation has its galaxy of heroes whom it honors as warriors, statesmen, philosophers and poets. Scarcely is the world's hero placed in the tomb when the admiring public begin their demonstrations in his honor, monuments are erected to his memory, his statues are placed in conspicuous places, while the press is lavish of its praise in his behalf.

As the world, then, and as every nation in the world has its heroes who have won renown in literature, on the battlefield, or in the forum, so, too, has the Catholic Church her heroes who have won renown in higher, holier and nobler ways, whom she calls upon us daily to honor. But the heroes of the Catholic Church are far greater than those of the world. Yes; as far superior as the supernatural is to the natural, as grace is to nature, as heaven is to earth — so far are the heroes of the Catholic Church above those of the world.

On the 17th of March each year we honor one of the greatest of the heroes of the Catholic Church, of God's saints. Of course being Christians, we do not honor the saints as we do Our Lord; but we honor them as His representatives and faithful servants.

I

In St. Patrick we recognize one of the greatest of the servants of Jesus Christ.

A little more than 1400 years ago, a young Christian was taken prisoner in the northern part of France and carried to Ireland. It is needless to say that this young captive was he who was afterwards known as St. Patrick.

The history of Ireland before his time and since, the incidents of his life and the important results of his labors are familiar to you all.

That Ireland, at that time, was sunk in the mire of superstition; that Patrick after his escape from captivity resolved to prepare himself for the great mission of her conversion; that after years of preparation he went to Rome, the source of jurisdiction in the Church, and was consecrated by Pope Celestine, the first bishop of Ireland; that, principally by his labors, Ireland was changed from a superstitious, semi-pagan to a Christian nation, and, that, notwith-

standing the severest trials and persecutions for centuries, she has ever been true to the teachings Patrick so firmly rooted in the hearts of her people — these facts are well-known.

But, although Ireland at that time was a semi-pagan, it was not a barbarous nation. It had its monarch who was elected and whose privileges were limited. It had also its representative assemblies for enacting wise laws. It was ripe for the reception of Christianity. Hence we find that Christianity did not there encounter that fierce opposition it met in other countries. In other countries the Christian religion was not established until after their soil was watered with the blood of many martyrs immolated to their false gods.

But Ireland furnishes a glorious exception. The great apostle of Ireland labored undisturbed in his holy vocation for thirty years. He traveled through the island and everywhere taught by his word and example the meek religion of Jesus Christ. He was so successful in his teachings, on account of the docility and appreciative judgment of the Irish, that in thirty years he firmly laid the foundations of that faith which centuries of persecutions have been unable to undermine.

II

Although an ardent desire for knowledge, a great love of learning seems inborn in children of Erin, this ardent desire, this great love was strengthened, enlivened and vivified by the advent of Christianity to the isle. Learning, a knowledge of classic literature came with Christianity or was rather the result of it. When science and arts were on the point of extinction throughout the rest of Europe; when the northern barbarians, the Goths, Vandals and Huns under Alaric, Genseric and Attila, swept from the face of Italy almost every trace of civilization; when the Burgundians, Visigoths and others were devastating the rest of Europe; when the Mahometans were rushing like a torrent over the fair fields of Asia and Africa, destroying every mark of civilization and art; when monasteries were burned, monks murdered, libraries and schools destroyed; then, the torch of science blazed forth in Ireland with a lustre that not only attracted the notice and admiration of the world but also continually reminds us of what Ireland and Irishmen are capable of were they not inundated by the waters of oppression, and were not learning's torch dampened or extinguished by this flood.

History clearly tells us that from the 6th to the

9th century Ireland was supreme in the intellectual world. She was the center of learning, the schoolhouse and university of the world. Other nations sent their youths there to be instructed free of charge.

From her monasteries a swarm of missionaries went forth to every land in Europe.

St. Gall evangelized Switzerland; St. Columbanus, France and Lombardy; St. Kilian penetrated Germany and sowed the seeds of the Gospel in Franconia; St. Columkille founded the celebrated school that was to Christianize so many countries, especially Scotland and Northern England.

So numerous were those holy and learned men that went forth from her sanctuaries during the first two or three centuries after St. Patrick's earthly labors were over, that even a foreign historian says she was called Insula sanctorum et doctorum — The island of saints and scholars.

If she evangelized Europe when she was free to teach openly, her brave and generous sons have been hardly less serviceable to the world since she has been so cruelly persecuted. For on whatever shores their lot has been cast — in whatever land they have become citizens they have generously given their labor, their treasures and their blood for the benefit of their adopted country. But this

belongs to the national part of this day's celebration, and I wish to confine my remarks here to the religious part of it.

III

Let us not forget, while honoring the memory of this great servant of God, to mark the lessons to be learned from his life. If "Lives of great men oft remind us we can make our lives sublime," what a beautiful reminder and example we have in St. Patrick's life. Torn away from parents and friends and cast upon a foreign shore in his tender youth with no one to pity, none to feel for his miserable lot; sent as a slave to tend cattle in hunger and cold, he had nothing to comfort him but his Christian spirit of faith, hope and love. This same spirit of faith, hope and love ever animated him and was the motive principle inducing him to return a second time to Ireland, not in slavery, but to rescue its people from the slavery of Satan. It was this spirit that made him such a faithful follower of the Son of God in his zeal, humility and mortification. His zeal for souls was unbounded. In his work of saving souls no obstacle restrained him, no dangers, labors, sacrifices or sickness held him back. He went through the island blessing, praying and teaching the same truths that our Catholic Missionaries

are to-day teaching in China, in Japan and in every part of the world.

He taught Ireland those eternal principles of Catholic truth which have been her aid in need, her strength in temptations and persecutions; which have given her hundreds of saints and martyrs, making her rivers run red, turning her hills into Calvaries.

But, like that divine institution from which she imbibes her strength, she has many times been doomed to death yet "fated not to die." She always rises again more glorious than before. Time and again did she have to fight the good fight, yet she kept the faith. And certainly a brighter day is dawning for the children of St. Patrick; they will not be downtrodden always. No! A day will come when Ireland will be free. How that day will gladden the hearts of Erin's sons in every land! Let us hope that the day is not far distant when we will see her all that we would wish her:

"Great glorious and free
First flower of the earth and first gem of the sea."

PASSION SUNDAY

THE HOLY SACRIFICE OF THE MASS

"In every place there is a sacrifice, and there is offered to My Name a clean oblation." MAL. I, 11.

The Epistle for Passion Sunday mentions some of the sacrifices of the Old Law which prefigured the great sacrifice of the New Law.

We learn from Genesis of the fall of man. Universal tradition, as well as Scripture, informs us that the creature formerly became guilty in the eyes of the Creator. All nations, all peoples, endeavored to appease the anger of heaven and believed that a victim was necessary for this purpose. Hence sacrifices have been offered from the beginning of the human race. Cain and Abel offered sacrifice, the one the first fruits of the earth, the other the firstlings of the flock.

Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Melchisedech worshipped in this way, and their worship was acceptable to God.

The Pagans following the primitive traditions, or obeying the law written on the tablets of their hearts, sacrificed to their idols, which they took for the true God. Everywhere, then, even among heathen na-

tions, you find the altar, the priest and the sacrifice. Among some of the heathen the light of nature had become so dimmed that human victims were supposed to be the only ones capable of appeasing the outraged deity.

God Himself carefully prescribed the quality, manner, number and place of the various sacrifices which He was pleased to accept from the hands of His chosen people, as we learn from Leviticus, Deuteronomy and other portions of the Old Testament.

From this fact, that sacrifice has ever formed a prominent feature in the worship of all peoples, we conclude that it belongs to the essentials of religion and that Christians to-day should have "an altar of which they cannot eat who serve the tabernacle."

I

The sacrifices of the Old Law were provisional and prefigured the great sacrifice of the New Law prophesied by Malachias. This glorious promise of Malachias that "From the rising of the sun even to the going down, my name is great among the Gentiles; and in every place there is a sacrifice and there is offered to My name a clean oblation; for My name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord of Hosts —" (Mal. I, 11). This glorious prom-

ise is fulfilled only by the great sacrifice of the Catholic Church. We alone can exclaim with St. Paul "Habemus altare," we have an altar and a true sacrifice.

Of all the blessings Jesus Christ bequeathed to His Church the Sacrifice of the Mass is the greatest, most precious and holiest. The Holy Mass is the sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ which is offered to the Heavenly Father under the appearances of bread and wine. It was instituted by Christ Himself at the Last Supper, when He blessed the bread and wine and said: "This is my body. This is my blood." He instituted it in order to represent and continue the Sacrifice of Calvary. The Apostle Paul says (I Cor. XI, 26) it was instituted to show forth the death of the Lord until His second coming. After the consecration, which the priest effects by saying over the bread and wine the same words which Jesus Christ said at the Last Supper, there is no longer bread and wine but the true and living Jesus Christ, at the same time God and man, though hidden under the appearances of bread and wine.

The priest offers Him up to His Heavenly Father in the name of the Catholic Church, or rather He offers Himself up, and we may confidently hope that we will obtain more through prayers at the

Holy Mass than through our own unaided prayers.

In order to have part in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass a person should follow the actions and prayers of the priest, especially at the offertory, canon and communion; or meditate on the passion of Christ, say the rosary or the prayers in the prayer books, at the same time uniting his intention with the intention of the sacrificing priest.

The Sacrifice of the Mass is a true sacrifice because it is the oblation of a victim to God to represent by its destruction or change His supreme dominion over life and death. It is offered to satisfy our four great debts and wants: in adoration to God for His omnipotence, in thanksgiving for His benefits, to obtain pardon for our sins and to obtain His assistance in difficulties and temptations. The Holy Mass obtains for us all kinds of grace, spiritual and temporal.

II

Since the Mass is the highest act of public worship it is proper that it should be celebrated with fitting sacred ceremonies. Although these ceremonies have been frequently subjected to ridicule, let me tell you that there is not one which the Church prescribes, not a single sign of the cross, without its significance. They all tend to bring before our

minds the Passion of Our Lord, which mystery is there renewed, and the dispositions fitting for those who are present at this solemn act.

The Altar, which is ascended by steps, represents Mt. Calvary. The Crucifix recalls Jesus dying on the cross. The lighted candles are symbols of the faith and devotion which ought to burn in the hearts of the faithful when present at Mass. The sacred vestments, embroidered with the sign of the cross, indicate that the priest is the minister and visible representative of Jesus Christ, the invisible Priest. The sign of the Cross made many times by the priest over the Host and Chalice reminds us that we offer to God the Divine Victim of the Cross and that we ought to unite ourselves to Him by loving the Cross, by patience and Christian penance. We genuflect because Our Lord is really present; if we know He is not present on the Altar we only bow in honor of the place where He sometimes reposes. The Sacrifice of the Mass, then, is the Sacrifice of Calvary, since the same Victim is offered up, and by the same High Priest, Jesus Christ.

III

The Emmanuel, the God with us, the thought of whom made Isaias tremble eight hundred years before He came, that Divine Teacher who loves to

dwell with the children of men, the Catholic Church beholds with transports of gratitude, admiration and love dwelling in the midst of us full of grace and truth.

"Proud sectarians whose errors she has confounded, tyrants who have shed her blood in torrents, prophets of death who have so many times pronounced her obsequies, be not surprised that she has so easily triumphed over your sophisms, wearied your executioners and given the lie to your predictions. She has with her a God infinite in Wisdom, infinite in power, infinite in duration."

If you have visited ancient cathedrals, or even some of the grand churches in this country and admired the varied ornaments and artistic wonders therein, if you have ever been present at our religious solemnities and witnessed the gravity of our ceremonies, the beauty of our chants and the piety of the adorers; if you have reflected on the spirit of sacrifice, self-forgetfulness and self-devotion so common to Catholicism and so unknown elsewhere — the spirit which prompts multitudes of young persons of both sexes to forsake the world and devote themselves to the care of the sick, to the education of children and to other works of charity — if you have witnessed these things and reflected upon them, you cannot but have asked yourselves why are

such gorgeous temples built; why such magnificent works of art; what prompts such sacrifices? And the answer will be, because the Church is the edifice where God daily renews the prodigies of His mercy and whatever its beauty and magnificence, it can never be worthy of His love or our gratitude; because God is ever with us in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar to soothe our cares and answer our prayers.

We have seen, my dear friends, that the Supreme action of religion is sacrifice, in which something is offered to God in a state of immolation, thus recognizing Him as Master of life, and death; that from the beginning of the world this action of religion has been commanded and observed by the people of God; that the ancient sacrifices of the Jews had reference to, prefigured that of Christ upon the Cross and on the altars of His Church; that the Sacrifice of the Mass is the same sacrifice of Calvary perpetuated in an unbloody manner and which fulfills the prophecy of Malachias "In every place there is a sacrifice," and that this prophecy of Malachy is unfulfilled unless it is fulfilled by the Sacrifice of the Mass.

This Sacrifice of the Mass instituted by Christ at the last supper when he said "This is my body; this is my blood, do this in commemoration of me," has

been the public worship of the Church of Christ at all times as we learn from St. Paul who says " We have an altar whereof they have no power to eat who serve the tabernacle." (Hebrews XIII, 10.) St. Irenæus says " Christ in consecrating bread and wine instituted the sacrament of the New Law which the Church received from the Apostles according to the prophecy of Malachy."

The Son of God, after having taught us by His word, shown us by His example and merited for us by His grace the virtues necessary for salvation, would institute the Blessed Sacrament to come Himself and imprint them upon our hearts. Of these virtues the most important are humility, meekness, obedience, patience and charity. Let us ask God while present at Mass for a lively faith in His real presence, an ardent love for Him in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar and the grace to imitate His humility, meekness, obedience, patience and charity here and enjoy His presence forever hereafter.

PALM SUNDAY OR GOOD FRIDAY

THE LESSON OF THE CROSS

"My soul is sorrowful even unto death; stay you here and watch with me. And going a little further he fell upon his face; praying and saying: My Father! if it be possible let this chalice pass from me." St. Matt. XXVI, 38, 39.

During the last days of the holy season of Lent we commemorate the sorrowful passion of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Until the day of His glorious resurrection summons us to joy, our hearts should dwell with His in the desolation of Gethsemani, in the cruelty of Jerusalem and in the ignominy of Calvary. We should bid farewell to Thabor and follow Jesus to Golgotha; forget His glories and reflect on His sorrows. There we will find abundance of solace for our grief, consolation for our afflictions and encouragement for our trials and tribulations.

The Passion of Jesus may be divided into five parts corresponding to the five sorrowful mysteries of the Rosary — The Agony of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemani, The Scourging of Jesus at the Pillar, The Crowning of Jesus with Thorns, The Carrying of the Cross by Jesus to Mount Calvary and The Crucifixion of Jesus on Mount Calvary.

I

First let us follow Him into the Garden of Olives, and witness the agony, that frightful mental suffering which was the beginning of His Passion. The Gospel account of the Agony is pathetic in the extreme. (St. Matt. XXVI, 37.) "And Jesus taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee he began to grow sorrowful and to be sad. Then he said to them . . . My soul is sorrowful even unto death; stay here and watch with me."

If in His death on the cross He was like a God, in his Agony He was, if I may so speak, like a man. Falling on His face and remembering all the sins of the world, a bloody sweat oozed from His sacred body.

The moon with her pale light never beheld such a sad spectacle as she gazed upon that awful night in the garden of Olives.

There passed before His mind in a sort of panoramic view all the treachery of the Jews, the hypocrisy of Judas, the denial of Peter, the sins of His dearest disciples and all those for whom through their own fault His blood would be shed in vain. How agonizing this must have been to the sensitive feelings of the amiable Jesus. How it caused the blood to trickle from every pore in His sacred body!

Who can imagine the fearfulness of the conflict that caused that sweat of blood! Did you ever think that when you have offended God by sin, each offence was an additional pang to the heart of Jesus increasing the tortures of His agony? Grieve then that you have thus caused that blood to flow and resolve for the future to drink of that bitter chalice consecrated by His sacred lips — to drink of it resignedly and penitently in trials and afflictions, in sorrow and contrition.

II

After Our Lord received the traitor's kiss and was seized by His enemies He was led to the city, where the scenes in that terrible tragedy follow one another in rapid succession. Denied by the Prince of the Apostles, presented to the high priests, accused at Pilate's tribunal, mocked by Herod, He is finally scourged. "I find no cause in this man," says Pilate, "I will chastise him, therefore, and let him go." What a blasphemous thought! Chastise Him who is innocence, holiness, perfection itself! He is then scourged — a punishment reserved for the vilest of mankind. Imagine you see the innocent Lamb of God surrounded by that mob of ruffians, stripped with rudeness, His wrists bound, and tied

to a pillar. He seems to be abandoned to the anger of God and the fury of men.

The brutal executioners shower on Him their cruel blows till He is covered with blood, gashed and swollen from head to foot. Every part of His sacred body is covered with one continuous bruise. Gash has run into gash and the flesh is torn in flakes from His bones. What a piteous spectacle Jesus now presents! What a contrast with what He was the day before, when seated at the table of His love with the twelve and John reposing on His bosom! What a tender sorrow we should feel and how we should deplore that sad change!

III

But another scene of barbarity yet remains. The fierce desires of the cruel soldiers are not yet exhausted. They know that Jesus had declared Himself king of the Jews, so they proceed to crown Him in mockery. They weave a crown of hard, sharp thorns and place it upon His sacred head. Then they press upon it until its points pierce the skin and penetrate the flesh.

The blood trickles down His face and neck and mingles with that of the scourge. In civilized countries everything possible is done to spare the

suffering of one condemned to death. But these heartless, cruel, hardened ruffians, after placing in His tied and bleeding hands a reed as a scepter, passing before Him bent their knee in mockery, spit in His sacred face, struck His thorn-crowned head while they in derision saluted Him with the words "Hail, King of the Jews." Did refinement of cruelty ever exceed that of the Roman soldiery? Jesus standing there covered with blood, His face disfigured with the marks of blows and spit and blood, His eyes weary, His sacred body lacerated and mangled — even then in such an abject condition a Godlike nobleness shown all over Him, causing Pilate to exclaim "Behold the man."

IV

This appeal caused the mob to cry out "Crucify him, crucify him." "Take ye him and crucify him," said Pilate, "for I find no fault in him." Then began His sorrowful journey with His cross to Calvary.

When we consider that Jesus after having been scourged and crowned with thorns was unjustly condemned by Pilate to die on the cross; that He was so weakened from loss of blood that He could scarcely walk with His heavy load; that falling several times the soldiers rudely struck Him; that strip-

ping Him of His garments they treated Him so roughly that the torn flesh came with them; that these barbarians fastened Him with nails on the cross and allowed Him to die with anguish on that infamous gibbet; when, I say, we consider all these things and that He suffered all for our sins, can we help feeling compassion for Him and remorse for having by our sins been the cause of so much suffering, and will we not say with our whole heart "O my Jesus, I love thee more than myself. I repent with my whole heart of having offended Thee. Grant that I may never offend Thee again, but that I may love Thee always and then do with me what Thou wilt."

V

What cruel torments He must have suffered during the time He remained on the cross. If it is wearying for us to remain a few hours in one position upon a soft bed, what must Jesus have suffered hanging on that hard cross with His body in such a condition? His body is one continuous wound against which His hard bed presses. Each of His hands, each of His feet, is pierced with a long nail, which, on account of the weight of His body, tears wider and wider the rent it has made. O what a smarting, torturing, pain He endured during the three hours of the cricifixion! Who can imagine all

the King of martyrs suffered for the sake of others during that short time?

"Surely he hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows." (Isaias LIII, 4.) Man sins and the Son of God in order to make satisfaction for him is pleased to be condemned to death upon the cross. "He was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins," (Isaias LIII, 5.) If we had no other proof of the Divinity of Christ than His first words on the cross, they would be amply sufficient to convince us that He was God. Hanging on the cross surrounded by His murderers, before thinking of His mother, His friends or Himself He prays for His very executioners, His murderers. "Father forgive them." Can you look upon your Saviour and your God dying for His enemies and asking His Father to forgive them and refuse to forgive those who may have injured you?

After this brief consideration of the sorrows and afflictions of our God, suffering a bloody sweat in that garden of Gethsemani, scourged at a pillar in Pilate's hall, crowned with thorns, wounded from head to foot, His whole body mangled and streaming with blood, and all for us, will we not resolve to do something for Him? to give up some sin or sinful habit, to suffer something for Him and to have recourse to His sacraments, especially to confession

and Communion during the Paschal season? Such love for us as manifested by His great suffering and cruel death should cause us to love Him. Hard, indeed, must be the heart which, contemplating the Passion of Jesus Christ, will not be moved to compassion — to contrition, and to say "O! my suffering Jesus, who hast endured so much for me and on account of my sins, I am sorry for having offended Thee. I love Thee more than myself, and to show my love for Thee and appreciation of Thy love and benefits I resolve to amend my life, to frequent the sacraments and to keep the commandments."

EASTER SUNDAY

THE RESURRECTION — MOTIVES FOR REJOICING

"This is the day which the Lord hath made: let us be glad and rejoice therein." Words taken from the 117th psalm and applied by the Church to Easter Sunday.

To-day the Christian world is celebrating the great Easter Solemnity for which we have long been preparing. This is the bright sun of Christian festivals around which all other festivals revolve. This is the festival of festivals, the day which the Lord hath made. "Let us be glad and rejoice therein."

During the past few months, the solemn ceremonies of the Catholic Church have presented to our consideration the private and public life of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

We have learned salutary lessons of poverty, humility and mortification from the Divine Infant as He lay cold and abandoned in the crib at Bethlehem.

We have seen him subject to His Virgin Mother and foster father, St. Joseph, and have resolved to imitate His prompt obedience; while His faithful observance of all the details of the Law has filled us with admiration.

From His public life we learn the duties of charity. "He went about doing good," His whole life, but especially His public life, was a continual work of compassion and mercy.

For the past forty days we have been meditating particularly upon the sufferings of His passion and preparing by penance and mortification for the glories of His triumphant resurrection. We have followed Him to the cross and laid Him in the tomb. But the gloom and desolation of Good Friday, the lamentations of sorrow and the garb of mourning have been laid aside; and the Church to-day puts on her robes of splendor and pours forth her allelujahs with accents of joy.

She rises from her mourning more glorious than

the sun from the midst of clouds. But why such rejoicing? Why does the Church decorate her altars with the choicest flowers and celebrate this day with all the pomp and grandeur of her magnificent ceremonial?

It is because on this day we celebrate the consummation of His mission, of all His labors for the salvation of man. It is the anniversary of His victory over death and the powers of darkness.

Of the many reasons for rejoicing I wish to call your special attention to two from which all the others flow.

I. The first reason for our rejoicing to-day is centered in the fact that the resurrection of Christ is an unanswerable proof of His divinity.

I

That Jesus Christ is both God and man we, as Catholics, firmly believe. In fact, if we had the least doubt about it we should cease to be Catholics. You all know that the Church has always taught it and that the faithful always believed it. But did you ever ask yourself why, upon what grounds, the Church taught it? Did it ever occur to you that the Church may teach some things without a reason? If so, let me tell you this: the Catholic Church guided by the spirit of truth is infallible and teaches

nothing that Christ did not teach, nothing that is not solidly grounded in Scripture or Apostolic tradition.

Let us then take a brief review of the reasons upon which this dogma is founded and then we will better understand the motives of our rejoicings.

If we follow the life of Our Saviour on earth from His birth until He began His public career, we find nothing extraordinary. He appeared as other men. He was called the carpenter's Son. Except on one occasion, His divinity was hidden; His humanity alone appeared.

Afterwards, when He had commenced His public ministry, we catch now and then glimpses of His divine nature. Although we see that He was a man, we see clearly that He was something more. "In things superior to man we may look to find God."

The changing of water into wine, the multiplication of the loaves and fishes, the healing of the lepers, the curing of the blind, deaf and dumb, the raising of the dead are as superior to the powers of man as heaven is superior to earth. God alone could perform them. No one but God can undo the work of Death. Jesus Christ had but to say to the man who lay four days decomposing in the tomb: "Lazarus come forth": and the dead arose, the blood began to circulate through his veins, and he became as he

was before he died. That Jesus Christ performed these wonderful things is as certain as is any historical fact. Had we been present, my dear friends, at any of these scenes, with what feelings of admiration and awe would we not have regarded the author of them! Would we not have been irresistibly impelled to fall at His feet and worship Him as more than human?

But if His divinity appears in these miraculous works, it appears far more strikingly in His own resurrection from the dead. All His other miracles — even the raising of Lazarus — might be and have been attributed to other causes; but His resurrection firmly establishes the fact that He was God.

He arose by His own power alone. Before His death He Who said "I am the resurrection and the life" had foretold that He would rise from the dead. "I will destroy this temple and in three days I will rebuild it." "I will arise again in three days." This prophecy was fulfilled. Three days after His death, Jesus Christ arose victorious from the tomb. The stone of the sepulchre was moved. The guards were overturned, awestricken and bewildered. The disciples beheld again their Master Who is glorious and immortal. St. Thomas, the incredulous Apostle, touched the scars of His wounds, and placed his hand in the wound in His

side and, moved by the miracle of the resurrection, exclaimed full of faith "My Lord and My God."

This fact of the resurrection of Christ firmly established by the four Evangelists who record it in almost the same words: "He is not here; he is risen," is the foundation of our Faith, and the confirmation of the divinity of Christ and of the Church founded by Him.

"If Jesus Christ be not risen," says St. Paul, "then is our preaching vain and your faith is also vain."

When we recall to mind the state of the world at the coming of the Saviour; when we remember that a large majority were in abject slavery; when we reflect upon the fact that all vices abounded, that woman was in a most degraded condition, that the family existed only in name, that gods of wood and stone were worshipped everywhere, that sensuality and vice received the honors due to God and that the transformation of society was wrought by Christ and His Church — then will we understand why we rejoice on this glorious day, the anniversary of that act which wrought this transformation.

II

The resurrection of Christ is a pledge of our own resurrection. Is not this another powerful motive

for our rejoicing? We shall rise again from the dead. What an irresistible incentive to perseverance! Yes, we shall rise at the last day. Faith teaches it, reason sustains this belief, tradition strengthens it, Scripture confirms it, and Christ's resurrection seals it.

Faith teaches it. The Apostles' Creed says "I believe in the resurrection of the body." In the Athanasian Creed we read "All men shall rise again with their own bodies." And the fourth Lateran Council defined that "All shall rise with the bodies which they now have."

This belief is not contrary to reason. For it is easily seen that if God can create the body of man from nothing, He can also collect the particles of the body once dissolved.

Everything in nature proclaims the fitness of this. Plants die and return again to life; flowers decay and revive; the seed that is put into the earth becomes corrupt and rises again to a new life.

Tradition strengthens our faith in this dogma. What was believed by the fathers and faithful in every age must be the true faith of Christ. But it is so with this dogma. Time will not permit many quotations. Tortullian who lived in the second century says that "the confidence of Christians is the resurrection of the dead." St. Ambrose says

"the resurrection of the body is necessary that the good acts may be properly rewarded and the bad acts may be punished."

Scripture, both of the Old and New Testament, confirms this faith. God will send His angel to call the dead to life. "For," according to St. Paul (I Cor. XV, 52) "the trumpet shall sound and the dead shall rise again incorruptible."

Each soul shall be united to the body it had in this life as is clear from the words of Job. (XIX, 25, 26.) "I know that my Redeemer liveth; and in the last day I shall rise and see my God; whom I myself shall see, and my eyes shall behold."

The resurrection is clearly stated by Martha when she says to Jesus (St. John XI, 24) "I know that he (i. e. Lazarus) shall rise in the resurrection at the last day." The possibility of the resurrection of our bodies is shown by the resurrection of Lazarus who had been dead four days.

But the great, the unanswerable argument, the seal, the pledge of our resurrection is the resurrection of Christ Himself. "For," says St. Paul, "If the dead rise not again, neither is Christ risen again." (I Cor. XV, 16.) And again he says "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again; even so them who have slept through Jesus will God bring with him . . . and the dead who

are in Christ shall rise first." (I Thess. IV, 13, 15.)

All shall rise, the just and the reprobate. The reprobate to ignominy and shame, but the just to glory and honor. The bodies of the just will be endowed with the qualities of a glorified body, like the body of Our Lord after His resurrection.

They will possess the quality of impassibility by which they will not be subject to pain or trouble of any kind; subtility by which they have the nature to a certain extent of a spirit; agility by which they are free from every burden and can travel through space with wonderful rapidity; and clarity by which quality the glory of the soul redounds and contributes to the glory of the body.

Christ on this day, by rising from the dead, obtained for us these wonderful privileges. O! my dear friends, are not these powerful reasons for our joy?

But in order that our joy may be complete, in order that we may aspire to this glorious resurrection, there is something necessary on our part. A spiritual resurrection must take place in us. We must rise from sin. We must, as St. Paul says in to-day's Epistle " Purge out the old leaven." Then with pure consciences and happy hearts we can feel to its fullest extent the joy which to-day's festival

ought to bring to every Christian. Then we can enter into the spirit of the Church and understand and feel the power of her joyous anthems and allelujahs.

Thus we see, my dear friends, the mystery of the resurrection is a pledge of our own resurrection, a proof of the divinity of Christ and the foundation of the rock upon which this Church reposes. Against that rock the storms and billows of two thousand years have beaten in vain. Against it all the powers of earth and hell have waged an incessant warfare. But there need be no fear; for He whose glorious resurrection we celebrate to-day has promised that "the gates of hell shall not prevail against her." Let us, then, rejoice on this glorious feast, and let us resolve to conform our lives with that of our Divine Model, that loving and imitating Him here we may spend an Eternal Easter with Him hereafter.

O! my dear friends, I wish this joy to each and every one of you. I trust you are all prepared to enter fully into the spirit of the Church on this glorious day. If any of you are not thus prepared, let me entreat you to remove the impediment. "Purge out the old leaven." Attend to your religious duties. Make a good confession and receive your Saviour in the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar.

Then you can raise your hearts in joy to the Lord. And then I can with confidence indulge the hope and prayer that you may so live that, when your time comes to finish this earthly pilgrimage, you may arise all glorious with Jesus and enjoy Him forever in that blessed abode whose joys it "Hath not entered the heart of man to conceive."

FIRST SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE SACRAMENT OF PENANCE

"Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven." JOHN XX, 23.

Leprosy has always been considered a figure of sin. As leprosy covers the body and makes it disgusting and frightful to behold; so sin covers the soul and makes it hideous in the sight of God. The law of Moses required lepers to separate themselves from society until their cure was certified by priests to whom the inspection of lepers was intrusted. And our Lord has been pleased, in the New Law, to institute a similar method for the cure of those afflicted with the more fatal leprosy of sin.

The spiritual leper, the sinner, is to show himself to the priest, make known the diseased state

of his soul and submit to the inspection and treatment of the priest who is the divinely appointed physician of the soul.

But should we not go directly to God, since He alone has power to justify us? 'Tis true, God alone can effect our justification, but He has appointed the priest to judge in His stead and pass sentence in His name. To the priests He has said "Whatsoever you shall bind upon earth shall be bound in heaven and whatever you shall loose upon earth shall be loosed also in heaven"; and again, "Whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven, and whose sins you shall retain they are retained."

Let us for a short time consider the Sacrament of Penance and the principal duty of the penitent.

I

Penance is, as you know, a Sacrament in which the sins committed after baptism are, by the power of the priest, forgiven those who confess them with true repentance. Penance is a Sacrament, because it is a sensible sign which produces grace, namely, the remission of sins, and was instituted by Christ. Our Saviour instituted the Sacrament of Penance on the day of His resurrection, because the Sacrament effects the resurrection of souls dead by mortal sin. It was promised some time before when

He said: "Amen, I say to you whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed also in heaven; whatsoever ye shall bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven." He fulfilled this promise on the day of His resurrection when He said: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins ye shall forgive they are forgiven them: and whose sins ye shall retain, they are retained." The effect of this Sacrament is the remission of sins committed after baptism. No matter how numerous or how great these sins are, provided they are confessed with a sincere repentance, they will be forgiven by the power of the priest. Properly speaking, Jesus Christ alone can forgive sins. But He communicated this power to His Apostles, charging them in turn to transmit it to all priests by means of the Sacrament of Holy Orders.

II

The Sacrament of Penance considered with regard to the penitent contains three parts: contrition, confession and satisfaction. "Contrition which holds the first place among the acts of penance," says the Council of Trent, "is sorrow of soul and a sincere detestation of the sin committed, with a firm determination never more to commit it." The penitent must not only know and confess all his

sins, but he must be sincerely sorry for them and resolve to sin no more. This contrition is absolutely necessary; and he who confesses and receives absolution without being heartily sorry for having offended God commits a grievous sin, a sacrilege. True contrition is a supernatural virtue and should spring from love of God, fear of hell or of losing heaven. Contrition is the penance of the heart. "From the heart," says Jesus Christ, "come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries." The heart then must receive the first punishment by a sincere sorrow, since in it sin originates.

After exciting in his heart a sincere sorrow for sin and a firm determination never more to commit it, after a thorough examination of conscience on the commandments of God, of the Church, the capital sins and the duties of his state and after making an act of faith, of love, of hope and especially of contrition, the penitent enters the confessional and confesses his sins. He first says "bless me, father, for I have sinned," then makes the sign of the cross and says the confiteor as far as "through my fault." Without waiting to be asked any questions he tells how long it has been since his last confession and whether he received absolution. Then he confesses his sins, beginning with the most grievous, or following the order of

the commandments. When he has told all his sins, he concludes by saying: "For all these sins and for those I have forgotten I ask pardon of God and of you, father, penance and absolution." Then he listens attentively to whatever advice the confessor is pleased to give him, renews the act of contrition and, as soon as he has returned thanks to God for the grace received, performs the penance imposed by the priest.

III

To the truly humble and sorrowful sinner confession is not a punishment, but a remedy for a tortured conscience. The most painful secret to be kept by a heart not yet corrupted by disease is the secret of sin and crime. The soul that loves God hates sin and desires to separate itself from it. To this desire is associated the desire of expiating it. All, from the mother who questions her child about wrongdoing to the judge who interrogates the robber, recognize in spontaneous confession an expiatory power and a means of grace.

Confession is necessarily accompanied by shame and humiliation; but this shame, this humiliation is diminished by the fact that eternal silence is divinely imposed upon him who receives it. Never since the time of Christ has it been known that a

priest divulged a single sin known through confession. They have been ill treated, as Father Kohlman in this country, have been even killed as St. John Nepomucene, in order to make them tell, but without avail. For what they knew through the tribunal of penance they knew as ministers of God, and no minister of the state could force them to divulge it.

A short time ago the papers gave us an incident of how confession is abused outside the Catholic Church. A certain conscientious man wishing to free his conscience before dying, sent for his minister. He told of some great crime committed in his youth. No sooner was he dead than the papers were full of his evil deeds. All ministers would not tell the papers, but most would tell their wives, who are not bad local newspapers.

The humiliation connected with confession is nothing to the insupportable confusion, the bitterest torture endured by him whose guilty conscience tells him that he is continually in the presence of the God of Justice and Holiness who is the unavoidable witness of his many sins. If confession had only the power to soothe and pacify the conscience by freeing it from the tortures of sin, the poison of crime, it would still be dear to virtuous souls and would only offend those whose hearts are

so hardened as to blunt the sting of remorse. Only sinners who, after a thorough preparation, a sincere sorrow and good confession, have felt what David describes when he says, " Beati quorum peccata remittuntur "—" Blessed are they whose sins are forgiven "— only such have realized the soothing, the beneficial effects of confession. If you ever noticed such after leaving the confessional you could see joy beaming on their countenances as if a heavy burden had been removed.

But this is only one of the benefits we owe to confession. It has a salutary influence upon the morals of those who practise it. The Pagans of the first century of the Christian era, as for example Seneca, speak of the reforming and guiding power of confession. Voltaire, the leader of the infidels of the 18th century, who made sport of everything Christian, says " that there is perhaps no wiser institution — that confession is an excellent thing, a restraint upon inveterate crime, a very good practice to prevent the guilty from falling into despair and relapsing into sin, to influence hearts full of hate to forgive and robbers to make restitution — that the enemies of the Romish Church who have opposed so beneficial an institution have taken from man the greatest restraint that can be put upon crime." The Infidel Rousseau

says " How many restitutions and reparations does confession procure among Catholics."

Confession is Christianity using its whole moral power to the correcting and perfecting of the individual.

Christianity continually uses its power to overthrow idolatry, to abolish abominable practices in the family, in the state and the theatres and to repair violence and injustice by the sanctity and sweetness of morality.

So, in the confessional, the ambassador of Christ meets hearts in which reigns an idol that he overthrows, a bad practice that he causes to cease, or some injustice that he repairs. Confession and communion are the gates by which Christianity penetrates the soul of man, wipes away its stains, heals its diseases and plants therein the seeds of virtue.

Confession assists in knowing ourselves. Confession of sin, with sincere sorrow and purpose to sin no more, is, as we have seen, absolutely necessary to salvation. " Whosoever confesseth his sins and forsaketh them shall find mercy."

We have seen, too, that auricular confession as practised by the Catholic Church, was instituted by Christ, as we learn from XVIII chapter and 18th verse of St. Matthew, and the XX chapter and 23rd verse of St. John, where He said " **Amen, I**

say to you whatsoever you bind upon earth shall be bound also in heaven," and "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins ye shall forgive, they are forgiven them: and whose sins ye shall retain, they are retained." Now how could the Apostles and their successors, the pastors of the Church, know what sins to bind and retain, what to loose and forgive unless the sins were confessed to them, and they were thus allowed to judge?

It has been practised from the time of Christ, as we learn from St. John, St. Cyprian and others. St. John, who lived to the beginning of the second century, says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all iniquity." I St. John I, 9. St. Cyprian, third century, says "Let each of you confess his faults, and the pardon imparted by the priest is acceptable before God." Other fathers and writers of the various centuries could be quoted showing that confession has been practised by the Church of God in every age. But if, as some say, the priests invented it, why don't they tell us when 'twas invented, where and why the priests did not exempt themselves from such a humiliating practice.

It is only the malicious and ignorant who calumniate the consecrated minister who sits in judgment

in the sacred tribunal. Those who lay aside their prejudice and study the question soon become convinced of its divine origin. A little study and reflection will show them that the Sacrament of Penance benefits society by preventing crimes that destroy government, cause riots and fill prisons; that it promotes human justice, makes men better and nobler, purer and higher; that it soothes the sorrowful heart whose crime might make the despairing suicide, and that individuals and families who frequently — at least every month — intelligently approach the Sacraments, receive God's blessings here and a pledge of His union hereafter.

SECOND SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE CHURCH — ITS UNITY

"There shall be one fold and one shepherd." JOHN X, 16.

If Jesus Christ left a Church to be our guide, to teach us His doctrine, to promulgate His law, and to administer His sacraments, it must follow that there are some signs by which we may know it and distinguish the true from the false. Otherwise, we are liable to be led into error. These signs, as

recognized by Scripture, are unity, sanctity, catholicity and apostolicity.

Let us to-day, consider the unity of the Church. By the unity of the Church we mean that the members of the true Church must be united in believing the same doctrines, partaking the same sacraments and obeying the authority of the same pastors. They must be one in faith and one in government.

I

In speaking of His Church it is a noticeable fact that our Lord never uses the plural number. He says "I will build my Church," not "My Churches." "Ædificabo ecclesiam meam." Hence, we see that the first and primary sign of His Church is unity.

In His prayer before the passion Jesus says "I pray for them also who through their word shall believe in me; that they all may be one." (Jno. XVII, 20.) Here our Lord prayed that His followers may be united in faith. And who will say that the prayer of Jesus was not heard?

St. Paul teaches that there must be unity of faith when he says in the Epistle to the Ephesians "One Lord, one faith, one baptism." That is to say, as you have but one God, as you expect but one heaven, so you must have but one faith.

Our Lord says in the 16th verse of the 10th chapter of St. John that "there shall be but one fold." But if His Church taught various and contradictory doctrines there would be various folds. It is evident, then, that unity of faith was to be a mark of His Church.

St. Paul in the fifth chapter of the Epistle to the Galatians ranks heresy, sects, with the crimes of idolatry and murder. But heresy is rejecting one or more articles of Christian faith, breaking the unity of faith.

St. Cyprian says, "Who holds not this unity of the Church holds not the true faith.

"The Church is one though she be spread abroad and multiplies with the increase of her progeny. Even as the sun has many rays, yet one light, and as from one source many streams of water may flow. Part a ray of the sun from its orb and its unity forbids the diffusion of light; break a branch from the tree, once broken it buds no more; cut the stream from its source, it will be dried up. Thus the Church sends her rays through the whole world with but one light; she stretches forth her branches over the universal earth, and pours forth her many beautiful streams; yet there is but one source, one head, one faith."

II

As she is one in faith so is she one in government. This can be readily inferred from the various figures used by Our Lord when speaking of His Church.

He calls it a sheepfold. "And there shall be made one fold and one shepherd." (Jno. X, 16.) What better example of unity could there be than a sheepfold? All the sheep in a flock cling together. They follow the same path, feed in the same pasture and obey the same shepherd.

So our Lord intended that all the sheep in His fold, the true Church, should follow the same path, the same rule of faith to heaven; that they should be nourished by the same sacraments; and that they should obey the voice of one shepherd, one chief pastor.

St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans compares the Church to a human body. But in the human body there are many members, all connected with and subject to the head. So also Our Lord wished the Church composed of many members to be united and subject to one supreme and visible head.

His Church is called a kingdom. "He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever and of his kingdom there shall be no end." (Luke I, 32.)

But in every kingdom there is but one king and one form of government. So, too, in Christ's spiritual kingdom, His Church, there must be but one form of government.

Common sense and reason teach that the Church must be one in faith and one in government. For God is one in essence. He is truth itself. And the God of truth could not teach opposite doctrines. And the truth never changes. What Christ taught and what the Church taught eighteen hundred years ago, the Church still teaches; for veritas Domini manet in æternum, the truth of the Lord remaineth forever. It never changes.

According to Scripture, tradition and reason, then, unity of faith and government is a mark of the true Church. It now remains to be seen what one of all those claiming to be the only true Church possesses this mark. Since there is only one Church that claims this sort of unity, or that has any reason to claim it, it must be in that Church if it exists at all.

In the Catholic Church alone are the members all united in one body, holding one faith everywhere the same, having the same sacraments and sacrifice, and submitting to the same visible pastor, the Roman Pontiff who is the center of Catholic unity.

All Catholics acknowledge Jesus Christ to be

their only Redeemer and believe all that is taught by Him and by that Church which He founded to continue His mission.

Yes, the Catholic Church of to-day as in all preceding ages is One; (1) there is but one principle of faith, divine authority, but one body of doctrines held by her pastors and her people; (2) there is but one system of Sacraments and worship; (3) all her members, though of different tongues, political parties and forms of government, are united to her visible head who together with her bishops, the successors of the Apostles, rule and govern the Church.

Thank God that you have the happiness of belonging to that one true Church of holy Scripture whose members constitute one fold under one shepherd, one body under one head; "For you are all one in Jesus Christ."

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

ST. JOSEPH

"And Jesus Himself was beginning about the age of thirty years, being, as it was supposed, the son of Joseph." St. Luke III, 23.

The saints are the friends of God. They are

those men, women and children, who, having lived a life according to God's law, and that of His Church, having overcome the trials, difficulties and temptations of this world, are now enjoying the victor's crown in the next. It is a mistake to suppose that the saints were far different from us. They were not. They were descendants of Adam as we are. They had the same corrupt nature, the same passions to conquer. But they fought bravely against them, conquered and are now in heaven. They belonged to every avocation in life. The farmer from his plow, his wife from the kitchen, as well as the priest from office, the sister from her convent and the monk from his monastery, the student from his desk and the instructor from the class-room go to form the great army of God's saints.

To-day, the feast of the Patronage of St. Joseph, let us meditate a few moments on his life and learn therefrom useful lessons.

I

St. Joseph, as is well known, was the foster-father of Jesus, that is, he took the place of a father in his regard.

He was likewise the husband of Mary, the Mother of Jesus. Although Mary was the Mother

of Jesus, we know that God, not Joseph, was His Father; for "He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary."

It is not proper, my dear friends, for us to dispute about the virtues of the saints and contend that one is greater than another. Still, we can plainly see that God seemed to be more liberal with His graces and favors to some than to others. For example, we all know that of all the saints the Blessed Virgin occupies the highest place in heaven next to God. And it is but proper that He should honor His Mother more than His friends. But next to the Blessed Virgin I think it can be safely said that St. Joseph occupies the highest place among the saints of God. I infer this from the teaching of God and of His Church.

When God was looking, if I may so speak, for a person who would properly care for His divine Son while sojourning here upon earth, He certainly must have chosen amongst all His saints the greatest, the best, the holiest. He passed by Adam, Seth, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and the other saints and patriarchs of the Old Law. These had sighed for a sight of the Saviour. It was denied them. Joseph was singled out by Almighty God as that one of all His servants most fitted to not only see, but to nurse, to feed and to live with the Mes-

siah as a father with a son for thirty years. What an inestimable privilege! to be a member of the Holy Family! Kings would have given mountains of gold, Solomon, in all his glory, surrounded with all that gold could purchase, with thousands of servants to obey him, would have given all he possessed for but a glimpse of the Man-God.

Yet Joseph, the poor carpenter, was chosen to take care of Mary and Jesus.

In honor of each of the other saints the Church has set apart but one day in the year; while in honor of St. Joseph the Church has set aside three days, thus clearly teaching that of all the saints, next to the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph is the greatest and deserving of the highest honors. This is but reasonable. For since God selected him from amongst all the descendants of Adam and so honored him as to place in his custody His only Son with the Virgin Mother, we are but following God in honoring him above all the saints.

We honor him by leading a good life — a life conformed to the will of God as was his life.

II

St. Joseph's life is a model for each of us. We are all men and women of labor. St. Joseph was a poor carpenter. Is not this a consolation for us?

When we are toiling at our various avocations, weighed down with the heat and burden of the day, tired and footsore, our limbs aching and our minds distressed, then let us remember that the Holy Family lived in a poor cottage at Nazareth and that, while Mary did the housework, Joseph toiled at the carpenter's bench, Jesus assisting him.

The thought of this should inspire us with a holy desire to do God's work where He has placed us and thus imitate the great St. Joseph, who is our special guardian, protector and patron.

The Bible sums up all it has to say about St. Joseph in three words "Ipse erat justus — He was a just man." And yet how much is comprised in this brief sentence? He was just. What is meant by this? It means that he possessed all virtues. He was conformed to the laws of God. He gave everyone his due. He was upright, innocent, pure, honest, honorable, blameless. He loved God above all things and his neighbor as himself. He did unto others as he would have others do unto him. He was patient under trials, persevering under difficulties and constant in the performance of good deeds. He did what God willed and did not murmur when trials came.

He was a just man means all this and more. Of how few can it be said "He was a just man"! Let

us endeavor to live so that when our time comes to die it can be said of us as it was of St. Joseph "He was a just man." He gave everyone his due. He was obedient to the laws of God and His Church. He was honest in his dealings with his neighbors. He cheated no one. He was kind to his family, upright in all his dealings with his fellowmen and just in the sight of God.

For the blessings we enjoy we should thank God morning, noon and night. We should unceasingly praise and thank Him for having directed our steps to this delightful land where untrammeled we can do His work; we should thank Him for having given us this beautiful country, fertile soil and good opportunities to raise for Him souls that will hereafter people heaven. I fear we do not appreciate the unspeakable benefits we enjoy. We sometimes long for life in a large city. There is a glitter; a glare about the great city that dazzles the eyes of a young person from smaller places or from the country. But in this as in other things "'Tis distance lends enchantment to the view." It has been said that God made the country, man made the town. There is a certain amount of truth in it. And in this as in all other works of God you can see its superiority to that of man.

The person in the country is in constant communication with nature. These works and beauties of nature can not but elevate the mind from nature up to nature's God.

The beauty of a cloudless sky of azure blue or one constantly changing by the shifting of clouds; the lovely tints of the rainbow or of the sunset in a bank of clouds, with its fiery red and fringe of gold; the purity of the country air; the loveliness of a rural scene in which you behold young animals of various kinds and sizes skipping over pastures of green; the crops of hay, oats, wheat and corn growing to maturity; all these things are well calculated not only to attract the eye of a lover of the beauties of nature but to cause him to think constantly of God Who giveth the increase to our flocks and the seeds we sow.

There is nothing more useful, nothing more beautiful to look upon than growing crops and green pastures teeming with glossy-coated animals.

The farmer whose animals and crops grow while he sleeps, who is becoming independent while resting, who on rising in the morning sees his corn four or five inches taller, his animals many pounds heavier than the night before; who breathes the pure air of an independent life, views the surround-

ing beauties of nature and appreciates them, cannot but be deeply impressed with the certainty of God's presence and providence.

Hence the country or a small town is the most suitable place in which to live and rear a family. Hence it is, too, that it is from the retirement of the country that heaven receives the greatest part of its recruits. Here we can live a life in imitation of St. Joseph at Nazareth.

And while endeavoring to imitate his life of retirement, of labor, of purity, of honesty, of justice, of all virtues, let us ask his assistance, his intercession.

Be assured he is a powerful advocate before God. When we remember that Jesus was subject to St. Joseph for about thirty years; when we recall to mind the fact that during these many years at Nazareth He obeyed promptly Joseph and Mary; when we consider that at the least word or sign of Joseph, Jesus quickly did what he wanted; when we consider, I say, these facts, then, we will learn not only as children promptly to obey our parents in imitation of Jesus, but also we will, in particular, learn that Joseph is above all the other saints in dignity and power to assist us.

St. Teresa says " Our Lord would teach us that,

as He was pleased to be subject to Joseph upon earth, so He is now pleased to grant whatever this saint asks for in heaven."

While asking him to obtain from God the grace of living a good life, let us not forget to ask for the grace of a happy death. If our death is not a good one, all is lost and heaven, our being's end, cannot be obtained. St. Joseph is the special patron of a happy death. He delivered the child Jesus from His enemies and has the particular privilege of delivering the dying from the snares of the devil.

His death was a most happy one, in the arms of Jesus and Mary. Pray that yours may be like it.

In all your trials, wants, troubles, difficulties and temptations "Ite ad Joseph," "Go to Joseph; pray to Joseph."

If you wish a special virtue "Go to Joseph." The lily in his left hand is a symbol of holy purity. He is the special guardian of the virtue of purity. If you desire that great virtue go to Joseph.

The ax in his right hand represents that he was a carpenter, a laborer. If you are tired of your hard lot of a laborer, go to Joseph; learn of Joseph to be patient and industrious.

Pray to him at all times and for all graces, but especially for a happy death. Ask that your death

may be like his, that in the presence of the Holy Family you may breathe forth your soul, repeating the sweet words, Jesus, Mary and Joseph.

THE FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE CHURCH — ITS HOLINESS

"But when he, the spirit of truth is come, he will teach you all truth." St. John XVI, 13.

The spirit of truth, the Holy Ghost, is promised to the Church to teach her all truth and to preserve her from error. The effect of this preservation from error is holiness of doctrine and life. The royal psalmist, King David, speaking in the 92nd Psalm of the glory and stability of the kingdom, that is the Church of Christ, says that holiness is one of its characteristic marks. "Holiness becomes thy house, O Lord, unto the length of days."

Our catechism tells us that the Church is holy because "its founder, Jesus Christ, is holy; because it teaches a holy doctrine; invites all to a holy life; and because of the eminent holiness of so many thousand of her children." The Catholic Church is truly holy both in (I) teaching and in (II) practice.

I

Holiness of teaching means the exclusion of all that is sinful and the enforcing of all that is good. The Church cannot teach anything that is sinful, because, according to the Apostles, Christ who is to remain with her forever, loved her so that He gave Himself up for her that she might be preserved "holy and without blemish."

Christ instituted the Church in order to continue His mission. But His mission was the sanctification of man. Hence it must be holy in teaching, otherwise it could not accomplish the end for which it was instituted.

The Catholic Church alone teaches, as Jesus Christ when on earth taught, both by word and example, the virtues of poverty, humility and mortification. It teaches that as Jesus Christ was a poor, humble, suffering and persecuted God-man, so must His followers be poor, humble, suffering and persecuted. They must deny themselves and follow His footsteps. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

In this is included, says the Following of Christ, the whole practice of a Christian life, and the way

marked out by which we may securely gain eternal salvation. For Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life; the way we must follow, the truth we must believe and the life we must hope for.

To live as Christians and to secure salvation, we must begin by renouncing and dying to ourselves; for this renunciation — this spirit of self-denial is the first principle of the Gospel, the fundamental law of Christianity, our most essential duty and the most effectual means of obtaining salvation. It is this interior mortification, this circumcision of the heart, this retrenchment of all criminal, dangerous, or useless indulgences which constitutes the difference between the elect and the reprobate. The character of our present sinful state should be that of penance, which is the end of Christianity and the assurance of salvation. We have to suffer anyway, why not make our suffering meritorious? To carry our cross with Jesus Christ is to suffer from all, while we are careful not to be the cause of suffering in others; it is to receive all pains of body and mind as coming from above; it is to endure with patience all the evils which happen to us from the justice of God or the injustice of man; it is to accept of contempt as our due and to consider it our greatest misfortune not to suffer anything for God, but our sovereign happiness to suffer always

for His love. Yet how few are willing to be with Jesus on Calvary and how many would wish to accompany Him to Thabor! How many willing to share His happiness, but few His suffering. Still the Church teaches that we must be imitators of Christ. "Be ye followers of me," says St. Paul, "as I am of Christ." And Christ says, "Be ye perfect, as your Heavenly Father is perfect." The Church in inculcating upon us the duty of leading perfect lives is but carrying out and continuing the teachings of Christ and His Apostles.

II

She must not only be the teacher of sanctity but she must be the mother of saints. All that is high, holy, heroic and perfect must find a place in her life as in her teaching. Since her founder Jesus Christ is holy, since the end for which He founded her, namely, the salvation of mankind, is holy, since the means He instituted in order to obtain this end, that is, prayers, the Sacraments, are holy, it follows that His members who partake of these means, who do what Christ's Church teaches, must also be holy. She alone dares to publish to the world a catalogue of saints. Others may build churches to the honor of the saints, but those saints so honored are saints of the Catholic Church.

When we speak of the sanctity of the Church as regards her members, we do not mean that they are all holy. Far from it. Our Lord Himself expressed this fact in some of the parables; as for example, in that of the net which contained good and bad fish, and in that of the field in which the good grain and the cockle grew till the harvest time, when the angels came to separate them. But we mean that all who practise the teachings of the Church will be holy, will become saints. And if there are many bad members it is because they do not practise the teachings of the Church which Christ founded to show us the way to heaven. No Church but the Catholic Church has any claim to holiness of teaching and holiness of practice. Outside the Catholic Church there is no holy doctrine. In fact, they have no doctrine at all. They have, as the result of their boasted principle of private judgment, conflicting and contradictory opinions variable as the wind; but they have no body of doctrine. Ask them what they believe; they cannot tell you. Or, if they do tell you something, what they tell you to-day will be contradicted to-morrow. But ask the Catholic child of six or seven years what he believes, and he will tell you "I believe in God, etc." The Apostle's Creed contains an epitome of Catholic doctrine.

The Catholic Church, then, founded by Jesus Christ, and coming down to us from the Apostles to the present by an unbroken line of supreme rulers, spread throughout the whole world, continuing the mission of Christ in China, in Africa, in Japan, in Oceanica, in America, everywhere, is the only one that can lay, or that pretends to lay any claim to sanctity of doctrine and practice. She is now and ever has been the altar of every sacrifice, the home of every charity.

The works and virtues of the Catholic Church make known her sanctity. Her zeal in the conversion of the heathen, her forbearance with weak, unfortunate sinners, her charity towards the poor and afflicted, her patience in suffering the scoffs and insults of the world manifest her divinity and show that she is but continuing the mission of "peace and good will to all mankind," the mission for which Christ came upon earth and founded her to fulfill.

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

PRAYER

"Ask and you shall receive." St. John XVI, 24.

There are only two roads leading to heaven, one is the road of innocence, the other of penance. If we have soiled our baptismal robe of innocence by sin, then we must by penance make atonement for the injury offered to God. Every day of our life should be interspersed with little works of penance. When we kneel down to pray, when we have any little disappointment, trouble, trial or affliction, we should offer it to God in a penitential spirit, in atonement for our sins. Prayer is one of the principal works of penance. "My house," says our Lord, speaking of His Church, "is the house of prayer," and, as a natural consequence, every worshipper in this house should be a person of prayer. Man is a dependent being. He comes into life helpless and ignorant of the past and future. He has nothing of his own. The weakness of his infancy, the misfortunes and trials of advancing years and the helplessness of old age teach him this and show him the necessity of calling on a su-

perior power. Hence prayer has always been the natural dictate of the human heart.

We know that man was created in innocence and destined for felicity; but by sin he has lost his innocence and weakened all the powers of his soul. On account of the influence of sin the lower parts of his nature, his bodily senses, are continually urging him on to guilty excesses. Satan and all the powers of hell are bent on his destruction; while the world in league with Satan smiles upon and caresses, in order to delude and destroy him.

Such are the spiritual dangers that continually threaten man, and such the motives which should urge a reasonable person to have recourse to prayer, to seek the protection of heaven.

The thought of a just and angry God should be a sufficient motive to induce the sinner to ask His pardon. But a stronger motive would be the thought of eternal desolation, and the fire that is not extinguished.

Without prayer the sinner cannot return to grace. For it is a truth easy to understand that all the efforts of man are insufficient to obtain supernatural virtue without the co-operation of heaven.

Prayer, then, is absolutely necessary for our salvation. That is absolutely necessary which is a

necessary means for a necessary end. But prayer is a necessary means for our eternal happiness, our necessary end, and hence is absolutely necessary. Our salvation is a necessary end, because if we do not attain it all is lost, and happiness, the end of our creation, cannot be attained. Prayer is a necessary means to attain this end because God says, "Ask and you shall receive; — Whatsoever you ask in my name it shall be given you; — Without me you can do nothing," i. e., without His assistance we can do nothing, much less attain salvation.

The saints were all persons of prayer. St. Patrick, it is said, was accustomed to kneel in prayer three hundred times a day. We cannot see how they did so much, since they spent so much of their time in prayer. But they understood that without God they could do nothing, hence their frequent recourse to Him.

A man of prayer is a man of God — a saint. A man who does not pray is a man of the world. He who prays will be saved. The one who does not pray will most certainly be lost; for by prayer, and prayer only, do we obtain the grace necessary for us in resisting the temptations of our spiritual enemies. "And who shall know thy thought, O God, unless thou send wisdom." What is wisdom? Is it gold, learning, worldly pleasure? No. It is

the power of judging rightly, the power of knowing the importance of things, especially of heavenly things. It is a gift of God by which we endeavor to do His holy will. We cannot obtain this without prayer. We cannot be pure, good and virtuous without prayer. "Pray lest you enter into temptation" is a warning given by our Lord to all and especially to the person of society who daily mixes with the heedless throng and breathes the contaminating air of a wicked world.

But some one may say, "my prayers are never answered. I have been praying continually for years, and I make no improvement." Is not this because you do not ask with confidence, because you are indifferent in your prayers? If some one asked you for a favor but was indifferent, did not seem to care whether he received it or not, would you grant it? If a subject went to his king and, while in his presence, was muttering, casting shy glances around and otherwise showing indifference and disrespect to his majesty, the king would undoubtedly order his guard to eject him. But God is more merciful. He forgives us a thousand times for our wilful distractions, indifferences and disrespect to Him.

He desires our amendment. He wishes us to approach the throne of grace with confidence and love.

Jesus assures us that our prayers will be heard if we pray with confidence, humility and perseverance; for He says, "Pray always and faint not; whatsoever you ask the Father in my name, it shall be given you."

Remember, then, that prayer is absolutely necessary for our salvation, since it is a necessary means for a necessary end; happiness, our salvation, being the end of our creation, which cannot be attained without prayer.

Remember, too, that prayer not only unlocks heaven for us and locks hell against us, but it also unlocks purgatory for our friends and those detained there.

Bearing these things in mind, we cannot but resolve to be more regular and devout in our family prayers and in our morning and evening devotions and our other religious duties.

We cannot fail to ask Almighty God for any grace and blessing we want for ourselves or for any one else; which will certainly be obtained if God sees it is for the best.

And we thus begin upon earth that sweet converse with God which will be our happiness for ever in heaven.

THE ASCENSION

"And the Lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God." St. Mark XVI, 19.

These words, my dear friends, taken from the Gospel according to St. Mark, remind us of the festival of the Ascension of our Lord into heaven. Our Lord had told His disciples that He would ascend into heaven to enjoy the glory He had shared before the world was created. "A little while and you shall not see me," He says, "because I go to the Father." Had there been nothing to detain Him, He would have ascended immediately after His resurrection from the tomb. But He had to remain to show the truth of His resurrection and to further instruct His Apostles. Hence the Ascension did not take place until forty days after the Resurrection. During these forty days He at times manifested Himself to His disciples, speaking to them of the Holy Ghost and the kingdom of God. Appearing to them for the last time in the Cenacle, He again promised them the Holy Ghost and sat at table with them. After this He led them to Mount Olivet. Then He said to His Apostles "All power is given to me in heaven

and in earth: go into the whole world and preach the Gospel to all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: and behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." Having said this He blessed His Apostles. Whilst the twelve Apostles and the disciples were receiving this blessing they beheld Him rising toward heaven, returning victorious to His kingdom. Lost in wonder at His glorious ascension, overwhelmed with sorrow at the thought of losing Him, the Apostles continued to gaze upon Him as He slowly ascended, until a cloud coming hid Him from their view.

While still looking up to heaven, two angels appeared in human form and said to them: "Ye men of Galilee why stand you looking up to heaven? This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come as you have seen him going into heaven." Then the Apostles returned to Jerusalem and, following the instructions of our Saviour, remained in the Cenacle praying until the coming of the Holy Ghost on Pentecost.

One lesson to be learned from the Ascension is that, although by the sin of Adam man was drawn from God, by Christ's Ascension his thoughts are raised to heaven, and a hope is held out to him of a blessed eternity.

The forty days which preceded the Ascension are the model of the life which the true disciple should live. The life of the Christian should be a heavenly life, hidden in God. It should not be a worldly life. It should not be spent in the vain pursuit of worldly matters. But it should be spent in such a way that it will terminate by ascension into heaven. He who leads such a life, he who is a good Christian will be a good citizen. It is one of the characteristics of our religion that while it has principally in view the pleasures, the beatitudes of the next world, it likewise constitutes and secures for us happiness in this world.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER

THE CHURCH — ITS CATHOLICITY

"The Spirit of truth, who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me." St. John XV, 26.

The Holy Ghost, the Spirit of truth, is to abide with the Church forever and keep her One, Holy, and Catholic. We have seen on previous occasions that the Church founded by Jesus Christ to continue His mission of leading souls to heaven must possess unity of faith and government, as well as holi-

ness of doctrine and practice. Otherwise it would fail to fulfil the end for which He instituted it. We have seen, too, that no Church but the Catholic Church possesses these two characteristic marks of the Church of Christ, unity and sanctity. Let us consider one other mark which Christ's Church must possess, for any Church not possessing it can lay no claim to be the true Church of God. Christ's Church must be Catholic.

By the Catholicity of the Church of Christ we mean that it is to "Subsist in all ages, teach all nations and maintain all truth." This Catholicity or universality as to time, place and doctrine is founded on the words of Christ as contained in the XXVIII chapter of St. Matthew, "Going therefore teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the world." Since the mission of the Church of Christ, the object for which she was instituted, is to lead all men to eternal happiness, she is necessarily and essentially Catholic.

The diffusion of the Church over the whole world was to take place without fail. It was not to depend upon the Apostles alone. Christ was to be

with them. "Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world."

But the teaching of Christ and His Apostles, although to be universal, was not to reach every individual. Many would be found unworthy. Their culpable idolatry and infidelity or their shameful vices would prevent them from receiving the apostolic message. For they would not correspond with the grace given them, without which they could not receive the heavenly message. Many even hear the message without heeding it. They go to their farm or merchandise and reject the grace of faith.

They who, on account of their vices, do not deserve and they who reject the grace of faith, form and always have formed the majority of mankind. For "Many are called, but few are chosen."

The Catholicity of the Church is to be taken in a moral, not physical, sense. That is, it is not to be so understood that she is to contain absolutely all men within her fold, but a sufficient number to show that she has fulfilled the divine command to "teach all nations." She is to be so diffused that she can with truth be said to be world-wide, universal, Catholic. Her mission, the leading of all men to heaven, required that she should always be Catholic, diffused throughout the whole world.

She was to become Catholic by teaching all truth to all nations; and her teaching and governing authority was to preserve her Catholicity. This authority is divine. All are bound to obey it under pain of eternal damnation, for Christ said when giving it "He that hears you, hears me," and "he that despises you despises me"; and "those that do not believe shall be condemned."

It is not her fault if all do not recognize this authority, or if some reject it after having submitted to it. Each has a free will, and, if he does not wish to submit to the call extended to all, he must suffer the consequences.

From what has been said, it is plain that the Church of Christ should be Catholic, diffused through all nations, teaching all truth and subsisting in all ages.

Now what one of the churches claiming to be the Church of Christ possesses this characteristic mark? If we examine separately those churches outside the Catholic Church, we find that they are confined each to a separate country. Or, if societies of the same name exist in more than one country, they differ in doctrine and government and are, in fact, separate societies.

Every one of them owing to their fundamental principle, private judgment, is, or is fast becoming,

what Macaulay called the Church of England. "A hundred sects battling within one church."

Another fact which shows that those churches outside the Catholic Church have not this characteristic mark is: they were not diffused by teaching the nations, but by detaching from the Church by appeals to gross passions and by brute force.

But the true Church was to be diffused by "teaching all nations."

From the very beginning of Christianity, shortly after Christ gave the command to "teach all nations," the Catholic Church has possessed this characteristic mark of the true Church — Catholicity. At the beginning of the second century St. Justin Martyr says, "There is no people, whether Greek or barbarian, among whom prayers are not offered in the name of Christ crucified."

Everywhere, says Tertullian, "are to be found the disciples of the crucified, among the Medes and Parthians, in Asia Minor, Egypt, in Gaul, Britain, and Germany." If the true Church was really and truly Catholic in those times of persecution, when to be a Christian was to expose yourself to lose everything and often even life itself, it has been so to a greater extent since.

Her lines extend across all known lands, in Europe, Asia, Africa, America, among the Chinese,

Indians and Australians, until they become entangled among the jungles of the barbarians. She so completely fills the world that, looking back through the vista of years, we scarcely see anything but her.

All the nations that have been converted to Christianity have been converted by her. Her history is the history of the civilized world. Her Apostles, bishops and priests converted every civilized nation of the world. Everywhere and at all times she is one, holy and Catholic, because the Holy Ghost, the spirit of truth abides with her forever.

PENTECOST

"But the Paraclete, the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things." St. John XIV, 26.

The important event commemorated in the festival of to-day is the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles. This great day of Pentecost marks the fulfillment of all the previous prophecies. It is the birthday of the Christian Church. On this day was verified the promise of Christ: "You shall receive the power of the Holy Ghost coming upon you." (Acts I, 8.) Descending as a mighty wind,

appearing in parted tongues of fire, He came upon the Apostles collected together in the Cenacle. He worked miracles through them, confirming and strengthening their faith in Christ. The twelve men, before weak, changeable and isolated, were knit together in unity, became temples of the Holy Ghost and were commissioned to go throughout the world and teach all nations.

I

The Holy Ghost united himself on this day to the mystical body of Christ, the Church. As the Divinity and humanity are united in the person of Christ never to be separated, so the Holy Ghost united himself to the Church never to depart from it. He will be its life, its guide and its voice to the end of time. "The Holy Ghost will teach you all truth."

The twelve Apostles in Jerusalem were the germ and commencement of the Church of God. This small beginning descended from the upper chamber, spread throughout the world and gathered together all nations in one faith, one baptism, one body and one spirit.

The Apostolic college which spread throughout the world, passing away was replaced by the Episcopate.

The words which the Holy Ghost put in the mouths of the Apostles passed into the mouths of the pastors and bishops of the Church. Hence in every age of the Church the perpetual assistance of the Holy Ghost is shown in her decrees by the words : "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." (Acts XV, 28.)

She is the voice telling us "This is the way; walk ye in it." Guided by the Holy Ghost, she is the infallible teacher among men. Jesus is still with her: "Behold I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world." The Church is Jesus teaching on earth.

II

But where is this Church? If people only knew where this divine voice was to be heard, all controversy would cease. There is one sure test by which it may be known.

The Apostles were united with Peter. He was first among them, the head of all. They taught no other doctrine but the doctrine of Peter. They had heard our Lord say: "Thou art Peter; and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it; and unto thee will I give the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, it shall be bound in

heaven." (St. Matt. XVI, 18, 19.) Again He said to Peter: "Feed my lambs; feed my sheep," "Confirm thy brethren." Peter, then, was their head. He was chief of the Apostolic college which on Pentecost received the Holy Ghost. Has he ever ceased to be head of the Church? Who stands in Peter's place to-day? Has he a successor to his authority? The whole world of old believed that Peter's first successor was Linus. Linus was succeeded by Cletus and so down the stream of time to Leo XIII, and Pius X. By one long chain of pontiffs, about two hundred and sixty-three, linked and connected as closely as the generations of men, we are in direct contact now through the present Pontiff with St. Peter, Prince of the Apostles and Vicar of Jesus Christ. Every other body, every other Church had its origin at some period in this long line of history. We can easily find the time when every other community claiming to be a Church came into being. Has that only Apostolic Church been disinherited? Has the Holy Ghost passed from His dwelling place? If, as on the day of Pentecost, the Holy Ghost still dwells in her, then, she is divine; then, that one voice of God, the Holy Ghost, infallibly speaks through her now as He did on that day.

III

From this it follows that the doctrines of that Apostolic, Catholic Church are divine and that those doctrines are imposed on the consciences of men under pain of eternal death.

The doctrines of that one Church of God are the doctrines of the Holy Ghost. If they are the doctrines of the Holy Ghost, they are pure, divine, incorrupt and incorruptible. They are true and tend to elevate our souls to God. The Church teaches the highest moral law ever taught to man. The same moral precepts promulgated on Mount Sinai, taught by the prophets, as well as the moral lessons of the Sermon on the Mount are constantly repeated to the children of the Church. Her zealous pastors ever point out to the people the judgments of God on the one hand and His mercy to the repentant sinner on the other; the terrible punishment of the reprobate and the never ending joys God has reserved for those who love Him and keep His commandments. His doctrines are the direct teaching of the Holy Ghost. Many of them surpass the reason of man.

The doctrine of the Holy Eucharist, of the Substantial Presence of the Body and Blood of Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament, surpasses the reason of

man as does the Incarnation. Being the doctrines of God they bear the impress of His hand. The very fact that they surpass human reason shows that they are from God and are to be received by faith.

It is to incur pain of eternal death not to believe that which God the Holy Ghost has revealed. The Church of God, speaking by the Spirit of God imposes the duty of belief and obedience in the same words which the Apostles spoke at Jerusalem. "It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us." Therefore all who can know these truths are bound to know them.

As God the Father is in a particular manner called the Creator, God, the Son, the Redeemer, so God the Holy Ghost is named the Sanctifier, because He sanctifies us by infusing gifts into our souls. The gifts of the Holy Ghost are sanctifying grace, the theological virtues, faith, hope, and charity, and the other virtues, seven of which are in a special manner called the gifts of the Holy Ghost. These are Wisdom, Counsel, Understanding, Fortitude, Knowledge, Piety and Fear of the Lord.

The gift of Wisdom teaches us to despise the things of the world, and appreciate the things of God. By the gift of Understanding we learn to comprehend and penetrate the truths of faith.

Counsel or Prudence teaches us the way of salvation. By Fortitude we acquire the power to overcome every obstacle in the work of salvation. The gift of Knowledge tells us our duties here below. Piety inspires us with love for God, for all holy persons and things. The gift of the Fear of the Lord causes us to hate sin and all that displeases God.

The Apostles on Pentecost day received all these gifts in their fullness.

That we may partake of those precious gifts let us purify our hearts from every sin, let us frequently invoke the Holy Ghost, and let us follow with docility His holy inspirations.

THE HOLY TRINITY

"O the depth of the riches, of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways!" ROMANS XI, 33.

These words, my dear friends, taken from the Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans, are applicable to this day's feast — a feast in honor of the greatest mystery — the mystery of the Trinity.

There is nothing grand, nothing beautiful in life that is not more or less mysterious. Man himself

is an inexplicable mystery. He knows comparatively little about himself in this world, while the future is hid from his view. Nature in her varied forms has many mysteries he cannot fathom. If we find mysteries, then, in the natural order, it is not surprising that we find them also in the supernatural: if nature is full of mysteries, why wonder at the mysteries of religion?

The grand mystery of our Lord's teaching is the mystery of the Blessed Trinity (the feast in honor of which we celebrate to-day). This mystery is that in one God there are three Divine persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, equally distinct and of the same Divine nature. The Church in teaching this mystery is in perfect harmony with revelation, tradition and reason.

I

That revelation is divine, all Christians believe. Its divinity rests upon facts and principles which if denied, would overturn society and destroy all evidence.

Since revelation is divine, is from God, whatever it teaches must necessarily be true.

Now revelation teaches the mystery of the Holy Trinity — that in one God there exists three distinct persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Hence, we must believe it, although we do not understand it.

And it is easy to believe when we know that God teaches it and that God can deceive us no more than we can deceive Him.

There are passages in the Old Testament which contain the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, as in the Book of Genesis, God the Father and Creator of all things seemed, as it were, to be taking counsel with the other persons of the Blessed Trinity when He said "Let us make man to our own image and likeness."

Many passages in the New Testament enounce the doctrine, among them that from the fifth chapter of St. John, "There are three who give testimony."

The words of Jesus taken from the 28th chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel of to-day are a sufficient proof that the mystery of the Holy Trinity is taught by Scripture. "Go ye," says He, "and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost."

II

It is a profound mystery which we must humbly believe, as did the saints and faithful of all ages since the time of Christ, without trying to understand it.

St. Augustine was one day walking along the seashore trying to dive into and understand the mysteries of God, when he saw a beautiful little boy pouring water from the ocean into a small hole he had made in the sand on the shore. He asked the boy what he was doing. The boy answered that he was trying to pour all the water in the ocean into the hole. St. Augustine immediately saw that the little child was an angel sent by God to teach him that as it was impossible for the small hole in the seashore to contain the water of the mighty ocean, so too, it was impossible for man's little intellect to comprehend the ocean of divinity. St. Augustine says the true God is Trinity in persons but one in substance.

We have some semblance of this mystery in nature. The sun, though one body, has three closely united but distinct forces; fire, light and heat.

The soul is one in substance though endowed with three faculties: will, memory and understanding.

So God is one in substance though three in persons: the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

III

This mystery of the Holy Trinity is above reason but not contrary to it. It is above reason because

it pertains to the infinite God and man can never with his weak intellect understand the infinite perfections of the Deity. But God and His Church teach that in one God there are three divine persons, and right reason tells us that God can teach nothing unreasonable.

There are some things that we know through the medium of the senses, as for example, color, size and most things we know. Other things we learn by means of the intellect, as truth. And others we know by faith, as the mysteries of our Holy Religion.

The mystery of the Holy Trinity is one of the first articles of our creed and the end of all the other mysteries. All the other mysteries and all the festivals we celebrate tend to the glory of the Triune God — the Holy Trinity.

The Christian is dedicated to the Holy Trinity from his Baptism to his death. At his Baptism by the invocation of the Holy Trinity he becomes a child of God the Father, a disciple of God the Son and a temple of God the Holy Ghost. Whenever he makes the sign of the cross he invokes the three divine persons and shows his faith in the Holy Trinity. His sins are forgiven in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, and at his death the priest who prepared him says: " De-

part out of this world, O Christian soul, in the name of the Father Almighty who created thee; in the name of Jesus Christ the Son of the living God who suffered for thee; in the name of the Holy Ghost who sanctified thee."

Let us, my dear friends, not imitate those who know not God nor His holy religion. Let us not forget God and busy ourselves in beautifying our farms, building fine buildings and amassing wealth. Let us ask ourselves whence this beautiful world came and whence our wealth came. Then we will love and honor and adore the great giver of all — God the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

FOR CORPUS CHRISTI OR SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE REAL PRESENCE

"Take ye and eat, this is my body. And taking the chalice, He gave thanks and gave it to them saying, Drink ye all of this, for this is my blood of the New Testament which shall be shed for many, for the remission of sin." St. Matt. XXVI, *26, 27, 28.*

The mysteries of our holy religion, my dear friends, have always been subjects of ridicule to the sceptic. The Holy Trinity is boastingly declared

to be contrary to reason; while the Incarnation of Jesus Christ is called an impossibility, an absurdity.

But perhaps no mystery of revelation has been so universally attacked as the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament of the altar. You know from your catechism what is meant by the real presence. You firmly believe, because the Church which is the pillar and the ground of truth teaches it, that Jesus Christ is really and truly, body and blood, soul and divinity, present in the Blessed Sacrament under the form and appearance of bread and wine. The Church in teaching this dogma asks us to believe nothing that is contrary to Scripture, to tradition, or to reason. In fact, if the Church could teach anything contrary to Scripture, tradition, or reason, she would cease to be the true Church, and the promises of Christ would fail to be fulfilled. It follows from this that, when any teaching of the Church seems to any one to be absurd, false, or unreasonable, it is because he does not properly understand it.

Let us then for a few moments examine this teaching of the Church — the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament — and see if it is not in perfect agreement with the Holy Scripture, tradition and reason.

I

If anyone will take up his Bible and read carefully the sixth chapter of St. John, the twenty-sixth chapter and twenty-sixth, twenty-seventh and twenty-eighth verses of St. Matthew, the fourteenth chapter and twenty-second verse of St. Mark, the twenty-second chapter and nineteenth verse of St. Luke and the tenth chapter of the first Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, sixteenth verse, he will certainly see that the Catholic dogma of the real presence is founded on Scripture.

In the sixth chapter of St. John we learn that our Saviour before instituting the Blessed Eucharist, wished to announce, to promise it solemnly to His disciples in order to prepare them for it. He first presented them with a type of the Eucharist in the multiplication of the five loaves by which He fed five thousand persons. After this miracle, He told them that He would give to them bread superior to that which they had eaten and that this bread was His own flesh and blood, "The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life." "For my flesh is meat indeed and my blood is drink indeed." These words it is almost impossible to understand in any other

than a literal sense. We find that He was thus understood by His disciples, and many of them left Him because they could not understand how He could give them His flesh to eat. Now if Jesus Christ did not speak literally, would He not have told His disciples so, rather than have them withdraw from Him?

This promise which was so difficult to be understood by those who heard it, was to be fulfilled at the Last Supper. On the eve of His passion Our Saviour and His disciples assembled in a large room at Jerusalem where the Paschal supper had been prepared. After eating of the symbolical lamb and washing His disciples' feet, Jesus took bread in His sacred hands and lifting His eyes to heaven gave thanks to His Father, blessed the bread, broke it and gave it to His Apostles saying, " Take ye and eat. This is my body which is given for you; do this in commemoration of me."

And taking the chalice, He gave thanks and gave to them saying, " Drink ye all of this. For this is my blood of the New Testament which shall be shed for many unto remission of sin."

These are substantially the words of the three evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke, and of the Apostle St. Paul. Again St. Paul in his first Epis-

tle to the Corinthians, chapter tenth, verse sixteenth, says: "The chalice of benediction which we bless is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? And the bread which we break is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord?"

Any one of these texts I have quoted abundantly proves the Catholic dogma of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

Reflect upon them. Reflect especially upon the words of Jesus Christ, "This is my body. This is my blood." Think what an insult it is to the divinity and veracity of Jesus Christ to doubt His words simply because you cannot understand how what appears to be bread is in reality the body of Christ. There are many things in the world around us you cannot understand. Do you understand how the bread you eat becomes part of your own body?

If we only remember that Christ had the power to change bread into His body, that He really did it when He said, "This is my body," since He did not say this is the figure of My body, nor this represents My body; that He could confer this power upon others as upon the Apostles and their successors, the bishops and priests of the Church, and that He in reality did so when He said, "Do this in commemoration of me"; if we only remember

this, I say, then we will never have any difficulty in believing in the dogma of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.

II

This dogma which, as we have just seen, is so clearly taught by Scripture, has been the belief of the Church of Christ in every age from the time of the Apostles to the present. Instead of quoting from the fathers and doctors of the different centuries in proof of this, I wish to call your attention for a few moments to what we call in theology the argument of prescription.

Prescription is defined to be a title acquired by long use or custom. This is what prescription means in law (a title acquired by long use) and it means about the same thing in theology. The argument of prescription, then, is an argument for a doctrine showing that it has been in use, been believed, from time immemorial, from the time of our Saviour.

Now if the doctrine of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament was not believed in every age since the time of the Apostles, somebody ought to be able to find out and tell us: who was the author of the new teaching; what time it began to be believed; in what place it was first

taught; what occasion gave rise to it; who were its opponents, its adversaries at its birth and when it was condemned by the Church. But no one has yet been able to show us the man who was the author of this doctrine; the time, the place or the occasion of its birth; its adversaries and condemnation. And hence we cannot but conclude that it was believed in every age and had Christ for its author.

Such in brief is the argument of prescription for this doctrine, but, that you may the more clearly see its force, a few words of explanation are necessary.

History records the names of the author of every new teaching of importance that has been introduced since the time of Christ. It not only records his name but also the time, place, occasion, adversaries and condemnation of the new teaching. Thus it is with regard to Arius, Pelagius, Nestorius, Berengarius and others. Do you think it would be different in this case? Is not this a doctrine of vital importance? Would not the people have arisen against such an innovator? Suppose some one would attempt to teach in our day a new doctrine that was difficult to understand. Would the people believe him? Would they follow him, or would they not revolt against him? So it would have been

in every century; for the people had the same passions and same feelings at all times.

Besides, no one would ever have thought of inventing such a doctrine. When men invent new doctrines they are shrewd enough to bring forward those that are easily understood and that pander to the passions. That is the secret of their success in gaining a large number of followers. They understand the evil propensity of human nature. Study the history of any of the innovations and you will see the truth of this.

Not so the doctrine of the Real Presence. It checks our pride, restrains all our passions. And although humanly speaking it is hard to understand, it is easy to faith; for we have but to believe, as did all the early Christians, the word of God when He says, "This is my body." "This is my blood."

III

But I cannot understand it, someone may say, and therefore it is contrary to reason. Did the consummate puerility, silliness, foolishness of this objection, my dear friends, ever present itself to you? You cannot understand it and hence it is against reason. Do you understand the Blessed Trinity? And is it against reason? No, although above reason it is not against it. Do you understand how

Jesus Christ is both God and man? Do you understand any mystery? No, if you did, it would be no longer a mystery, for a mystery is something above human intelligence. It is something incomprehensible to us, for it pertains to the divine nature. And as well might you attempt to ladle the ocean into a cavity on the shore as attempt to comprehend with your weak intellect the unfathomable ocean of Divinity.

The proper office of reason is to examine the evidences of revelation and see if God has spoken. But it constitutes no part of its office to dispute the Word of God. That God has spoken is evident from the fulfillment of many prophecies and the authority of numerous miracles. That these prophecies were fulfilled and these miracles performed is a matter of testimony. In proof of it we have the testimony of a large number of illustrious persons of all nations, professions and ages. Many of these were eyewitnesses to the fulfillment of the prophecies and performance of the miracles. Their testimony has been handed down to us by authentic tradition and history. Hence it cannot but be true.

Led by reason, then, we conclude that prophecies have been fulfilled and miracles performed. Reason also teaches that no one but God can prophesy, no one but God can derogate from the order of nature

by the performance of a miracle. Hence reason again compels us, as it were, to conclude that God has spoken, that revelation is divine.

Now when we know that God speaks, genuine reason will dictate that we humbly submit, that we bow our heads and say, "O! my God, Thou art the omniscient, infinite Creator of all things; I am but a poor, ignorant, finite creature. Thou are incomprehensible to my limited reason. Thou canst do many things I cannot understand. Therefore, when Thou revealest something incomprehensible, I will undoubtingly believe, knowing full well that Thou canst not deceive me." Thus will true reason ever act. And when God says: "This is my body," it will not hesitate to believe the word of God.

Besides, reason cannot show that this dogma is unreasonable. Again do not all who believe in the Blessed Trinity believe that the Holy Ghost is God? But we read in the Bible that the Holy Ghost appeared in the form of a dove. St. Matt. III, 16. Now is it not at least as conformable to reason for Jesus Christ, the second person of the Blessed Trinity, to appear in the form of bread as for the Holy Ghost, the third person of the Blessed Trinity, to appear in the form of a dove? But reason tells us that Jesus Christ is God and that He has declared

that He is truly present in the Blessed Sacrament. Hence it is not only possible but absolutely certain.

We have seen, my dear friends, that the Catholic dogma of the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament is taught by all the four evangelists and the Apostle St. Paul in clear and unmistakable terms; that it has been the belief of every age from the time of Christ to the present, and that it is in perfect harmony with reason. Now how do we show our appreciation of this heavenly gift? Does it inspire in us acts of love, gratitude and adoration? Does it remind us to think more frequently of God, to give to Him our first thoughts in the morning and our last in the evening? Does it serve us as an aid in restraining our passions? Does it keep us from lying, from cursing, from drunkenness? Does it make us more meek, humble and charitable? If not, it is because we do not properly appreciate it. We do not frequently receive it, nor pray to our Lord really present there.

Let us, my dear friends, endeavor to stir up in ourselves a more lively faith in the real presence of Jesus Christ in the Blessed Sacrament. Go to Him in your trials, pray to Him in temptations, and re-

ceive Him sacramentally with more frequency and devotion.

Then, like the just man, you will live truly by faith. The things of this world, sin and its consequences, will be abhorred. And penetrating the veil of futurity, heaven and its joys will brighten for you, and you will long for the day when your hope will be exchanged for reality, and your perseverance will receive the crown that awaits those who have kept the faith, persevered in the right path and not doubted the word of God.

THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

MAN'S NATURE, DIGNITY AND DESTINY

"There shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance." St. Luke XV, 10.

Christ's mission on earth was to save sinners. "I came not to call the just, but sinners to repentance." (St. Luke V, 32.) As the good shepherd leaves the flock and seeks diligently for the sheep that is lost, so Our Saviour, the Good Shepherd of our souls, seeks diligently for the sinner and brings him back to the peace and happiness of God's fold.

The sinner should strive earnestly to keep from

wandering away from God's fold. A knowledge of his nature, his dignity and his destiny will tend to keep man from falling away from God.

I

A knowledge of himself is one of the first things to be acquired by man. The old pagans understood this. One of their philosophers left us the maxim "Know thyself"; while the Christian poet beautifully and truthfully tells us "The proper study of mankind is man."

It does not require very much study for man to see that he is the greatest of God's creatures on this earth and that God has given him dominion over all terrestrial beings. What gives man this superiority? Is it his strength, his agility, or the acuteness of his senses? No. For in all these qualities man is surpassed by many of the animals.

Where, then, does his superiority lie? It lies in the rational element, which distinguishes man from all other creatures on earth. Man has reason, which other earthly beings do not possess. He is a rational creature.

When we say man is a creature, we acknowledge a Creator. Yes; man is the work of God, who, creating him to His own image and likeness, endowed him with an immortal soul and a mortal

body. Since man has an immortal soul destined to be happy or miserable for all eternity according to his works here, is he not foolish who, wandering away from God's fold, trades the soul for the body, the immortal for the mortal, heaven for the vile things of earth?

II

Man is distinguished from other creatures here below by the dignity of his nature. This dignity appears in his exterior although its source is the image of God that is in him. An ancient poet tells us that God gave man a noble countenance and made him stand erect with his face and head towards heaven. He is thus reminded to elevate his thoughts above the low and grovelling things of earth.

He who, imitating the animal, lives for sensual gratifications, works for temporal rewards and centers his affections in worldly treasures and pleasures, lowers the dignity of his nature and degrades the image of God that is in him. "Seek ye, therefore, first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things will be added unto you."

III

Man was not made for temporal things. God made man to know, to love and to serve Him here

and to be happy with Him forever hereafter. Such is the grandeur of man's destiny — the possession of God for all eternity. All the wealth, the fame, the honors and the pleasures of this world dwindle into insignificance when compared with this ineffable good.

This eternal destiny of man is so great, so important, so necessary that to acquire it he must sacrifice all things perishable — wealth, honors, fame, pleasure. That he may attain his destiny the sinner must return to God's fold and give up everything that would tend to draw him away from his heavenly home.

If we would frequently reflect upon our nature, our dignity and our destiny it would help us to resist temptation, restrain us from falling into sin, or, having fallen into sin, would assist us in giving joy to the angels by returning to God's grace. "There shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance."

FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

CELIBACY

"And having brought their ships to land, leaving all things, they followed Him." St. Luke V, 11.

Peter, according to the Biblical narrative, was the only one of the twelve Apostles who was married. After his call to the Apostolate, he left all things, including his family relationship, and followed Jesus. The other Apostles also left "all things" and followed Him. It could not be truly said that the Apostles left "all things" to follow Jesus if they continued their relationship with wife or family.

The priest is a man who sacrifices himself for the people. In imitation of the Apostles who left "all things" to follow Jesus and in accordance with the teaching of Jesus Christ and St. Paul that virginity is a higher state than matrimony, the Catholic priest leaves "all things," practises mortification and leads a life of celibacy in order to devote himself entirely to work for God and humanity.

I

It is said that the life of the priest is a hard and lonely one and, moreover, that it is unscriptural.

Let us see. That his life is a hard one is certain. His path is by no means one of roses; it is rather one of thorns. The young man knows this well before he enters it. He willingly enters it with a full knowledge of its duties and responsibilities. He knows well that it is a life full of trials and crosses. He knows, too, that the whole life of Jesus Christ from the stable of Bethlehem to the cross on Calvary's heights was one of continuous trials, crosses, mortifications and that the life of every follower — especially every minister — of Jesus Christ should be fashioned after that of His Divine Model. "If any man will come after me," He says in the sixteenth chapter of St. Matthew, "Let him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me."

The disciple, the minister of Christ, is not above his Master; and it is not becoming that the path of the disciple should be covered with flowers, while that of the Master was strewed with thorns and sprinkled with His own precious blood. Yes; the priest's life is a difficult one. But, the more difficult it is — the more trials he has to endure — the more he resembles Jesus Christ, his Model; and if he bears those trials which he shares with his Master here with a proper spirit, the more certain he is of sharing a happy eternity with Him hereafter.

II

Few questions are more clearly defined in Holy Scripture than that of religious celibacy.

St. Paul in the seventh chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians says: "I would have you without solicitude. He that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God; but, he that is with a wife is solicitous for the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and he is divided. And the unmarried woman and virgin thinketh about the things of the Lord, how she may be holy in body and spirit. But she that is married thinketh about the things of the world, how she may please her husband." Therefore, he concluded, "He that giveth his virgin in marriage doth well, and he who giveth her not, doth better." Could language be clearer? Marriage is good; celibacy better. "He that is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please God." This teaching of St. Paul is the teaching of the Church — that marriage is honorable; but that there is a holier state for those who are called by the grace of God to embrace it.

Religious celibacy is one of the principal causes which strengthen Catholic priest and missionary to

undergo all dangers, overcome all obstacles, face all terrors and expose himself to death in its most disgusting form in time of plague for the sake of his fellowman.

You are all acquainted with the fact that hundreds of priests and sisters voluntarily nursed the sick and dying during the yellow-fever scourge in the south at the risk of their own lives. Do you think they would have done so had they had families? No; they would have cared about the things of the world.

The venerable and saintly Bishop of Natchez, like the humblest of his priests, went from house to house administering to his flock. Finally, he himself took the yellow fever and for some time his life was despaired of. Twice was it reported that he died. But God had other work for him to do.

There is an island in the Pacific Ocean (the island of Molokai) whose inhabitants are lepers.

Leprosy is a loathsome disease that in a short time covers the whole body and makes it disgusting to behold. By the Old Law lepers were compelled to separate themselves from the rest of mankind and cry "Unclean."

To minister to the wants of the poor, unfortunate lepers living on this island, a certain priest went some time ago. After a few years, this charitable

priest, who was endeavoring to imitate his Divine Model, was afflicted with this dreadful disease and died. He slowly and inevitably died by inches among those people for whose salvation he would become a martyr. Other priests and religious willingly took his place.

Think you they would have done so, had they had families depending upon them?

The greatest of benefactions is to devote one's life to alleviate the suffering of mankind. Christ said: "Greater love than this no man hath that a man lay down his life for his friends."

This the good priest is ever ready to do.

Although death stares him in the face, he never shrinks from his post of duty, never abandons his flock, while there is a wound to heal, a soul to save.

When his duty calls him, he is not afraid of death because as St. Paul says: "He who is without a wife is solicitous for the things that belong to the Lord."

FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE CHURCH — ITS APOSTOLICITY

"Be ye all of one mind." I St. Peter III, 8.

The Apostle St. Peter exhorting the Christians of his day to unity of faith thus addressed them, "Be ye all of one mind." On account of this unity of faith the Church has at all times taught the identical doctrines taught by the Apostles. This is a mark of the true Church.

For the true Church of Christ must be Apostolic. By this is meant that the men who exercise power and jurisdiction in the Church to-day, must be able to prove to us that they are the legitimate successors of the Apostles; that they come down from them in unbroken line, in uninterrupted succession, and that they teach the same doctrine now as was taught by the Apostles and their successors of all times.

If the line be broken, if one link in the chain of apostolic succession be wanting, then he who teaches and guides is only a vain pretender, an impostor. For, as St. Paul says, "How can he teach if he be not sent." This sending, this mission of power and authority must come from God.

Christ gave it to the Apostles with the words "As the Father sent me I also send you" (St. John XX, 21), with the same power and authority to teach, to administer sacraments, to forgive sins.

This power and authority must be transmitted by the act of those who received them from God. Hence there must be in the Christian Church an actual living connection with the Apostles.

The power given to the Apostles by our Saviour was given for the salvation of men. For this reason it did not expire with the Apostles, but is to continue in the Church as long as there are men to save, i. e., to the end of the world, and was handed down by the Apostles to their successors as we learn from St. Paul's Epistle to Timothy, when he tells him to commend the things he heard from him to faithful men who shall be fit to teach others.

The Catholic Church and she alone has her origin, her doctrine and her mission from the Apostles. She and she alone can show that her ministers are legitimate descendants, successors of the Apostles. She alone teaches the same doctrine that was taught in every age since the time of Christ. She alone is connected by an unbroken line with Christ and the Apostles. For it is an historical fact that St. Peter, the prince of the Apostles, the first pope, came to Rome; that he established there the pon-

tifical see; that he remained there until his martyrdom in the year 67; that his first successor was St. Linus; that St. Cletus succeeded him; and so on down the stream of time in unbroken line, in uninterrupted succession from Peter to our illustrious Pontiff, Pius X.

The Catholic Church and she alone, then, is the Church of Christ; for she and she alone possesses those marks that must characterize the true Church of God. She only is one, holy, Catholic and Apostolic. A church without these marks cannot do the work for which Christ instituted His Church. A church that is not Catholic cannot "teach all nations" nor all truth.

A church that is not apostolic in origin, doctrine and mission must be of human origin. But she is from above. She is divine. She possesses a divine source of energy and vitality. She has a heavenly guide, which enables her to walk forever young and unchangeable among the ruins and graves of generations that are ever changing, ever dying.

SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE BLESSINGS OF THE CHURCH

"And they had a few little fishes, and he blessed them and commanded them to be set before them." St. Mark VIII, 7.

By the blessings of the Church we mean the authorized ceremonies and prayers of her qualified ministers by which persons and things are sanctified or dedicated to Divine service.

The Church blesses everything she uses. This blessing is not such an absurd thing as some who know nothing about it imagine it to be. It is simply a prayer said by the priest asking God to send His blessings upon the person or thing indicated.

People of all denominations say grace before meals, asking God to bless the food they are about to use. This is precisely what the priest does when blessing anything. He uses different forms of prayers ordained by the Church to implore God's blessing upon the articles before using them.

The priest receives the power and authority to bless in the sacrament of Holy Orders.

This blessing of churches, schools, houses, candles and various other things has its foundation in

Scripture. We learn from the Old Testament of the solemn blessing of the Temple of Solomon. St. Paul tells us in the fourth chapter of his first Epistle to Timothy that "every creature is sanctified by the word of God and prayer."

Churches, schools, houses, bells, books, candles, water, animals and persons are creatures. Therefore, according to St. Paul they may receive the blessing of the Church and be "sanctified by the word of God and prayer."

In the blessing of a church the building is sanctified by the sacred ceremonies and prayers of God's minister and dedicated to the service of the Almighty just as was Solomon's Temple of old. In the blessing of holy water on Sundays, in the blessing of candles on Candlemas and in the other blessings of the Church we are but following the practice of Our Divine Lord and of the Church of all ages as well as the teaching of St. Paul that "every creature is sanctified by the word of God and prayer."

We do not claim that those things that are blessed have any efficacy in themselves. We hope and believe, however, that God in His infinite mercy and goodness will protect and bless those who use them with right dispositions.

God is the source of every blessing. At all times

certain persons have had authority to bless in His name, so that their blessing actually conveyed God's blessing to the persons or things blessed. In the Old Law the sons of Aaron were the instruments of God's blessings; while in the New Law the Pope, Bishops and priests of the Church are the persons who have the power and authority to bless in God's name and in the name of the Church.

Articles blessed by the Church excite pious dispositions in those who use them rightly, remind them of holy things and elevate their minds to God.

SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY

"Not every one that saith to me: Lord, Lord shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven." St. Matt. VII, 21.

These words of our Divine Lord teach us what we must do to be saved. We must do the will of God. We must keep God's Commandments. We must lead good Christian lives.

I

A Christian is a follower of Christ. He is one who has been baptized, believes and professes the true religion of Christ. He is a being destined, before heaven and earth were created, to possess an existence which shall continue when heaven and earth have passed away.

The stars revolve in their orbits, the sun rises and sets for him; but when they are no more he will live on through eternity with Him who created him. For man — for the Christian — nations have arisen, flourished and fallen; for him God became man, suffered and died when the rocks were rent, the sun darkened and all nature seemed to mourn.

The Christian is destined for the happiness of heaven. His is a house not made by hands; his crown one of glory that will never fade. "My son, I beseech thee, look upon heaven." Thus spoke the heroic mother of the Machabees to the last of her seven sons. She had seen the other six martyred; she had beheld them heroically shed their blood for the law of God. The executioner stood ready with fire and sword and other instruments of cruelty. The youngest of the seven yet remained and the tyrant Antiochus was trying by threats and promises to shake his resolution. Then the martyr

mother, fearing that on account of the weakness of youth he might yield to the rich promises of the king and then lose the crown of glory, told him to think of heaven and keep the commandments of God.

The Church, our mother, addresses the same language to every Christian. Raise your sentiments, elevate your thoughts, rouse your courage, look upon heaven. Heaven is your country. You are on earth to prepare for it. Compare temporal joys with eternal happiness, the riches of earth with the treasures of heaven. How insignificant are all the joys, wealth, honor and rank of this world, when we think of never ending happiness. Rouse yourselves, then, Christians, and remember your dignity; remember that you are formed for eternity and should not busy yourselves with trifling things of time.

Such a dignity, such glory as awaits the Christian should be a strong inducement for him to fulfill all his duties, to live a life formed on the maxims of the Gospel and calculated to obtain for him the happiness for which he was created.

II

The Christian should not only believe the entire Christian doctrine, but he should live in accordance

with his belief. He must firmly believe all the truths which God has revealed to us and which He proposes to us by His Church. God who has revealed these truths cannot deceive us nor can He be deceived. Hence when man knows God has revealed a truth he must believe it, although he does not understand it. How many things there are in nature we do not understand. Still who denies them? Man must therefore humble his reason before the infinite wisdom of God, which speaks to him, "bringing," as the Apostle Paul says, "into captivity every understanding unto the obedience of Christ." (II Cor. X, 5.) The true faith is absolutely necessary for salvation. Our Saviour says: "He who will not believe shall be condemned." We must not only believe with our hearts but we must not fear to openly confess our belief whenever an occasion presents itself.

Faith alone, however, will not save us; for we learn from Scripture that "faith without works is dead." To have these necessary works we must practise virtue, we must obey the commandments. "If you wilt enter into life," says Jesus Christ: "Keep the commandments." What commandments? "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and first

commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." (St. Matt. XXII, 37, 38, 39.)

Nothing could be more just than these commandments. Since we are destined to live eternally with God, we should spend the present life in serving and loving Him. And since all the children of men are destined for the same happiness, they should have here on earth but one heart and one soul.

"On these two commandments hang the whole law and the prophets." If we keep these two commandments, if we love God and our neighbor, we observe all the commandments of God and the Church.

If we love God, we will honor Him, we will not take His name in vain, and we will sanctify the day which He has reserved for Himself from the seven days of the week by employing it in worshiping Him.

If we love God and our neighbor, we will honor those whom God has made use of to bring us into being, our parents, and we will abstain from injuring the soul and body of others.

The love of God and our neighbor will restrain us from unlawful pleasures; will cause us to keep our hearts and hands from things not belonging

to us and will prevent us from violating the truth, from bearing false witness.

We have seen the dignity of the Christian, the glory that awaits him and the duties he must fulfill if he would attain it. Formed upon the maxims of the Gospel, he should be a pattern of all virtues. He should be truthful in his discourse, sincere in his sentiments and upright in his conduct. He should be modest, humble, patient and kind. He should be detached from the world, fear sin, avoid temptations and subdue his evil inclinations by prayer and works of mortification.

In a word the Christian, the disciple of Christ, should imitate his Master — should resemble Christ in his sentiments, in his conversation and in his actions.

If parents would but teach their children to love poverty, humility, purity, mortification and obedience in imitation of their Divine Model; if they would frequently converse with them on the maxims of Jesus Christ, on the truths of their holy religion; if they not only propose to them as a model the example of Jesus Christ, but if they also gave them a good example, by going about doing good, by loving and assisting their neighbor, there would be

less selfishness, less hypocrisy, less pharasaism and more real, true, genuine religion in the world.

Let us, then, resolve to be Christians in fact as well as in name. Let us not only believe but live in accordance with our faith. Let us be followers of Christ who is the way, the truth and the light, and we will not walk in darkness but will enter the narrow way into the presence of truth itself in the regions of eternal light.

THE EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE PRECIOUS BLOOD

"Give an account of thy stewardship." St. Luke XVI, 2.

We are all stewards of Almighty God. He has entrusted to each of us the most excellent treasure on this earth, an immortal soul. To show its worth Our Divine Lord came upon earth and suffered and died.

Some day God will call upon us to give an account of our stewardship. Happy shall we be, if we have not wasted and squandered the gifts and graces Our Lord purchased for us by shedding His Precious Blood.

I

In the Precious Blood we honor and venerate the price of our freedom and our life. It is "the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanseth us from every sin." Whatever is good, whatever is holy, whatever is perfect upon earth has come to us by virtue of the Precious Blood of Our Redeemer. With what devotion, then, should we not commemorate the shedding of this most Precious Blood to which we owe so much.

When we think that God took upon Himself the flesh and blood of man in order to die and shed His blood for man's salvation; when we contemplate by what afflictions, stripes, wounds, lashes and gashes this shedding of His Precious Blood was caused; when we meditate on the great truth that God, the Father, who loved His Son with an infinite love was pleased with this atonement — then we cannot but be lost in astonishment and exclaim "How unsearchable are thy ways, O Lord, how inscrutable thy decrees."

Yet, can we not see in this the greatness of the love of Jesus? "Greater love than this no man hath, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (St. John XV, 13.) Jesus shed His Blood, laid down His life, for every one of us. Every drop

of His Precious Blood, from the first drop shed at the circumcision to the last drop poured out on Golgotha, was shed for each individual soul. The entire price was paid for each. If the human nature of Jesus Christ is to be adored on account of its intimate union with the Divine Substance, the Precious Blood is particularly adorable because it is also the price of our redemption.

II

What more powerful motives for our gratitude and love could there be? If a man were in prison, bound by chains from which he could not free himself, and some kindhearted person, moved by compassion and love for his neighbor, should ransom him, free him from the chains, would he not feel grateful to him? Would he not do all he could for him and to please him? Would he not try in every possible way to show his gratitude and love to his kind and generous benefactor?

Such was our condition before the merits of the Precious Blood of Jesus Christ were applied to our souls. We were in the prison of death, the slavery, the bonds, the chains of Sin. We could not liberate ourselves. No one but God could free us. God, the Redeemer, came. He freed us from the captivity of the devil. He ransomed us from the chains

of Sin. He gave the price, His own Precious Blood, and we were liberated from the prison of death.

And how do we show our gratitude and love? Do we show that we are grateful to Him and try to please Him by obeying His holy law? Do we keep the commandments of God and of His Church? Or do our actions rather tend to displease our generous, Divine benefactor? Do we trample upon the Precious Blood which He shed for us, by breaking some of His commandments or by receiving the Sacraments, the channels of grace, sacrilegiously?

Do we displease Him, insult Him, show our ingratitude to Him, by swearing, taking His holy name in vain, lying, cheating, slandering our neighbors, getting drunk or committing other sins? Do we trample upon His Precious Blood by unworthily receiving the sacraments which have their origin and efficacy in this Precious Blood? Do we receive them without the necessary preparation and dispositions? If so, let us be sorry for the past and resolve for the future to do all in our power to please Him and show our gratitude to Him.

Remember that everything good that is in you, everything holy that is in the world is owing to the merits of the Precious Blood of Christ. From

it the Church received its origin and the Sacraments their power of producing and increasing grace.

By it we are freed from our sins. But in order to partake of its merits here and hereafter, faith alone without good works is not sufficient.

We must not only believe what God teaches; but we must also obey — do what He commands.

For St. Paul lays down these two conditions when he says: "In Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything nor uncircumcision, but faith that worketh by charity." (Gal. V, 6.)

Let, then, your faith work by charity. In other words, show by your works the faith that is in you; show by your actions, show by your good Christian lives that Christ's blood has not been shed in vain for you. And ask Him through the merits of His Most Precious Blood to grant you all the graces necessary for your state of life and especially the grace of a happy death, that, having faithfully served Him here on earth, you may gloriously reign with Him in heaven when your time comes to give an account of your stewardship.

NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

DEATH

"For the days shall come upon thee: and thy enemies shall cast a trench about thee — because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." St. Luke XIX, 43.

The sinful city of Jerusalem, which caused Our Saviour to shed bitter tears and utter these words of warning, is a figure of sinful man. Having led a bad life, having neglected God's grace, having ignored the day of His visitation, the day of mercy, he is now in the presence of death, and his spiritual enemies "cast a trench" about him and bring him to despair of God's mercy.

If he had recognized the time of visitation, the time of mercy, if he had listened to the voice of God calling him to repentance, if he had frequently reflected on death, then his life would have been a preparation for death. "In all thy works remember thy last end, and thou shalt never sin." (Ecclesiasticus VII, 40.)

Death is a punishment of sin. "In what day soever thou shalt eat of it," says God to our first parents, "thou shalt die the death." (Gen. II, 17.) If it is a punishment of sin, it is also a

great preservative from sin. "Remember thy last end and thou shalt never sin." If we would but keep ever before us this thought, that we must one day die and render an exact account of our whole lives, of every thought, word, deed and omission, to a Judge who knows all things, who receives neither bribes nor excuses, would it not preserve us from falling into grievous sin and running the risk of dying in that state?

I

The young die as well as the old. Death is the end of life; and, although the young are but beginning life, they too must die when God wills. Those who flatter themselves that they have before them a long career of usefulness, many years of legitimate enjoyment, seldom or never think that before the morrow's sun death may claim them as his own.

Before the glorious orb of day sinks in the distant west, those who do not wish to surround the bright springtime of their lives with the gloomy atmosphere of death, may be wrapped in its cold embrace. For death is everywhere brought home to us. That grim workman is ever in our midst. He is inexorable to the cries of dear friends and the lamenta-

tions of fond mothers. He cares not for age nor condition; he strikes down all, both great and small.

The serpent may whisper in your ear, young friend, that although you must one day die, you have many years yet to live; so, enjoy yourself, and towards the end you can repent and prepare for death.

But he is the father of lies, and as he lied to our first parents in Paradise, so he lies to you. You may not live another day. Life is short at best. And the Great Disposer of life and death often takes the young in the freshness of early youth, or the vigor of early manhood or maidenhood, while he allows the old to whom life is a burden to linger for years between life and death.

Then listen not to the tempter whispering "long life." He is but deceiving you as he deceived our first parents in Paradise. But listen to the Church telling us even in our earliest years, when putting the ashes on our foreheads, "Remember man, thou art but dust and unto dust thou shalt return." And listen to the Holy Spirit when He tells you how to avoid sin: "Remember thy last end and thou shalt never sin."

II

Often think of this; think well on it, and it will be well for you. Often imagine that the hour has come — and it surely shall come — the most important hour of your whole life, the hour when you are to bid farewell to everything temporal, when you are to leave father and mother, sister and brother, relations and friends, when you are to bid adieu to everybody and everything you hold most dear.

Only one step, and you are on the broad, boundless ocean of eternity. One step, and you are standing before the Judge of the living and the dead to render an account. The memory of your many sins will then flash vividly before you, and you know not if they have been forgiven. Would you not wish to strip death of half its terrors? You can do this by remembrance of the great preservative from sin. "Remember thy last end and thou shalt never sin." For the terror, "the sting of death is sin."

One of the best resolutions we could form is to devote to God not alone the last days of our lives, when life is scarcely worth the living, but to give Him the freshness of our youth and the strength of our manhood and womanhood; to devote to His

service all the energies of our bodies and all the faculties of our souls.

Then, at whatever time God requires us to render an account, He will find us ready and watching.

Impress, then, firmly upon your minds: first, that you shall certainly die; secondly, that the hour so decisive, so full of consequences, is not far distant; thirdly, that God gives us ample means of thinking on death as a preservative from sin in the deaths of our relatives and playmates; fourthly, that this decisive hour is so uncertain that we may well be always armed and ready for our departure.

These reflections will have a tendency to make us less worldly and more attached to God, Who, while everything else changes, remains unchangeable, our good Father and faithful Friend. Death cannot deprive us of Him; but if we are faithful to the end, we shall see Him face to face a single glance of Whom would more than compensate for a thousand years of penance. If we offer Him our whole lives here, all that we are and all that we have, if we continue to the end to do all for His honor and glory, we shall enjoy forever hereafter the full fruition of the beatic vision.

TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE PHARISEE

"The Pharisee standing prayed thus with himself: O God, I give thee thanks that I am not as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers; as also is this publican; I fast twice in a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.

"And the publican, standing afar off would not so much as lift his eyes toward heaven; but struck his breast saying: O God, be merciful to me a sinner." St. Luke XVIII, 11, 12, 13.

In the Gospel of to-day, we have a most interesting parable recorded for our instruction. Two men, a Pharisee and a publican, went to the temple to pray. The former was to all human appearances a good, pious man. He fasted, prayed and gave alms. But he did it all publicly in order to be seen and to gain the praise of the world. Puffed up with pride he referred all the good that was in him to himself and thanked God that he was better than others who in reality were more acceptable to God than he.

The publican, in his humility, acknowledged that he was a sinner, asked God to be merciful to him and, as our Lord assures us, "went down to his house justified rather than the other."

Thus we see it is for our intention we have in

doing the work rather than for the work itself that we will be punished or rewarded.

The Pharisee did good works but through pride he considered himself the author of all. Pride is the ruin of many. Pride is the source of all evil, as humility is the root of all virtue.

Pride is the immediate consequence of original sin and exists in man from the beginning. It increases during infancy, and, when the mind is able to comprehend its evil effects, has acquired such strength that it requires severe conflicts to subdue it. Every day that resistance is put off, the difficulty increases. It is like a cancer that, if neglected, extends its fatal influence in every direction until it is beyond the possibility of cure.

Pride is opposed to God because it seeks to deprive Him of His glory by ascribing to man what belongs to God. It is besides the basest ingratitude, for man has absolutely nothing which he does not receive from God, still, through pride, he ascribes to himself the glory of God's favors. Hence God has visited pride with the most terrific punishments. Satan was the admiration of celestial princes, the fairest work of omnipotence. Surveying the heavens, he saw no other spirit of glory equal to his own, forgot his Creator and attributed his excellence to

himself. In that instant the thunders of wrath shook the pillars of heaven, and the lightnings of vengeance scorched the archangel into a demon. If we have imitated Satan, if we have been guilty of even a proud thought, it is only by repentance that we can cancel the condemnation registered against us.

Pride is opposed alike to the good of our neighbor and of ourselves. Filled with an opinion of his own good qualities, the proud man undervalues the good actions of others and attributes them to unworthy motives. He imagines his own greatness is increased by degrading others, and he seeks to detect the weakness of his neighbors while concealing his own vices. Hence detraction, calumny, suspicions, contentions, duels, murders are the natural offspring of pride.

Pride renders the child impatient of control, neutralizes the instruction of youth and induces manhood to reject all authority. Pride rejecting authority, rejects Christianity and embraces atheism.

The proud are detested by God and man; by God always, and by man always, too, unless when concealed by the pharisaical mask of hypocrisy.

The hypocritical Pharisee concealed his pride and other vices and was esteemed by men. God, who searcheth the heart, saw that he did nothing for God's sake, but that he even had the audacity to

praise himself and arrogate to himself the glory belonging to God. Hence He makes him no recompense; since he had his reward from men for whom he worked, fasted and prayed; for "God resisteth the proud but giveth his grace to the humble."

Let us ask ourselves, my dear friends, if we do not more resemble the Pharisee than the publican. Do we, like the Pharisee, perform our actions in order to attract the esteem of men? Or do we fast and perform other good works purely to humble ourselves before God? Many people do good works in order to gain the praise and applause of the world. They give to the church, to the school, or to the poor, provided their good deeds are advertised. Like the Pharisee, they fast, pray and give alms, but they boast about it. Let us endeavor to imitate the humble publican rather than the proud Pharisee. Let us humble ourselves before the mighty power of God.

Let us acknowledge that we are sinners, do good works to please God and not to please men; then, like the humble publican, we will go to our home justified rather than the proud Pharisee who thinks he is better than others.

ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

MAN'S DESIRE FOR HAPPINESS

"He hath done all things well." St. Mark VII, 37.

Some people can do many things well. Many people can do a few things well. No human being can do all things well. Of no one but God can it be said, "He hath done all things well."

In nothing does the fact that God has done all things well appear more clearly than in the desire for happiness which is divinely implanted in the heart of man. While this craving for happiness is a proof of God's goodness and providence, it likewise impresses upon us the fundamental truths of God's existence and the soul's immortality.

If there be no God, no future, if, as some would have us believe, man be a mere mass of matter, then there is no virtue, no vice. But there is a future; there is a God. He is the end to which the human soul tends. Hence "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord" and thus attain the end and aim of their existence.

Although the wonderful beauty and order and harmony of the universe ought to be sufficient to

convince any reasonable person that there is a God; although, as Cicero and Plato tell us, even in pagan times there never existed a nation that did not believe in a Supreme Being, and although philosophers tell us that this common consent of mankind is considered a criterion of certitude, a law of nature — still, even in this enlightened age, you will find some people who say that they do not believe in the existence of God.

But the soul troubles them. Do what they may, they cannot stifle in themselves the cravings of the soul for happiness.

Happiness is the necessary pursuit of man. Everybody desires to be happy. This is a truth that no one will deny. There is nothing in this world that will satisfy man's craving for happiness. Wealth will not do it; worldly pleasures and honors will not do it.

If the wealth, the pleasures and the honors of this world could satisfy man's desire for happiness, Solomon would have been happy. For Solomon had all the wealth, pleasures and honors of this world that anyone could desire.

Solomon tells us that when King of Israel and surrounded by all the luxuries that gold could purchase he was most unhappy and that " all is vanity "

except to love God. Our own daily experience teaches us the truth of this statement of the wise king.

Since, then, nothing in this world can make us happy, since we are continually surrounded by certain pains and uncertain pleasures and since the soul is continually craving for the happiness the world cannot give, there must be some state beyond the limits of time where these cravings will be satisfied and where the soul reveling in the regions of bliss will possess its God and, seeing Him face to face, will forever enjoy the full fruition of the Beatific Vision. This and this only will satisfy man's desire for Happiness.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

LOVE OF GOD AND OF OUR NEIGHBOR

"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself." St. Luke X, 27.

The love of God and the love of our neighbor go hand in hand. We cannot love God and hate our neighbor. The ten commandments of God are included in the two commandments of the love of God and of our neighbor.

If we love God above all things, we will give Him the honor that is due Him; we will not take His holy name in vain, and we will give Him that adoration, that love, and that service which He requires.

If we love our neighbor for the love of God, we will say nothing and do nothing to injure him in his person, in his property or in his character.

I

God wishes us to love Him. Love is the end of our existence, the solution of the great problem. Love is won and preserved by love. "Let us love God," says St. John, "because God first loved us."

God has shown His love for us in many ways. He showed His great love for us by creating us in preference to many thousand of possible beings whom He could have created and who would have given Him greater love, greater honor, than we have given Him.

He showed His great love for us by sending His only begotten Son to redeem us after we had turned our back upon Him by breaking His commandments.

Again He showed His great love for us by leaving us a Church to continue His mission, through whose sevenfold channels, the seven sacraments, the waters of grace may flow from the fountain of the

Holy Spirit to purify our souls and make them worthy of eternal life.

Never did mother love her infant so tenderly as God loves man. He makes Himself man's companion, his food and his heavenly reward. Surely one who has so loved us deserves to be loved with all our heart and mind and soul.

If we love God, we will do His holy will. "If any man love me, he will keep my word." There is a perfect union of wills between persons who love one another. We know God loves us. Let us show by our lives that we love Him.

II

Love of God comes first, of our neighbor next. By our neighbor is meant everyone, no matter what may be his race, color, or creed. We must love all for God's sake, because He created all in His image and sent His own Divine Son to die for all.

We must love our parents, our children, our brothers, our sisters, our friends and all mankind.

We do not love them, if we quarrel with them constantly, or wish them evil. Nor do we love God, if we do not love them.

Love one another, then, with a truly Christian love. Parents love your children. Give them good

example. Provide for all their wants. Above all, see that they receive a good Christian education.

Children love your parents. Obey them at all times. Be kind to them, especially when they are old and helpless, and God will love, bless and protect you.

We must love our neighbor with a genuine love, a love springing from the heart, a love that prompts us to do unto him as we would have him to do to us.

Love of our neighbor demands that we forgive those who may have injured us.

Do we always do unto others as we would like to have others do unto us? Do we always forgive others, or is there someone whom we will not forgive? Let us examine ourselves on this point.. If there is anyone against whom we harbor in our hearts feelings of revenge, we do not love God. For if we loved God, we would love and forgive our neighbor.

The essence of religion is the love of God and of our neighbor. Love is as old as religion, as old as man. "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God" was whispered into Adam's ear in the garden of Paradise. The second great commandment came a little later. When Eve was formed and two of the same race stood in Eden's groves God spoke to the hearts

of both "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Do this and you will do no wrong. Love God; love your neighbor with a true, genuine love, and you will keep all the commandments of God and God's Church and will save your immortal soul.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

GRATITUDE

"There is no one found to return, and give glory to God, but this stranger." St. Luke XVII, 18.

On a certain occasion, as this day's Gospel tells us, Our Divine Lord cured ten lepers. Of the ten who were cured, only one expressed his gratitude.

This incident in the life of Our Saviour shows us how common is the sin of ingratitude.

Are we not frequently guilty of this mean sin? God gives us our health as he restored it to the lepers. Do we thank Him for it?

He gives us every day countless gifts and blessings. Everything we have and everything that we are, we receive from God. He gives us our good home, our plentiful food, our happy hearts and our glorious country. Do we thank Him for all His

gifts, or like the nine lepers do we act as if there were no God?

Good Christians endeavor to be thankful to God at all times. They thank Him in the morning, they thank Him at night. They thank Him at their meals, they thank Him in time of trials and afflictions for the grace to bear them with patience. Above all do they thank Him when He comes into their hearts in Holy Communion.

Although ingratitude is so common, there is no virtue more beautiful, more ennobling than the virtue of gratitude. It is closely allied to justice. If a person grants us a favor our first impulse is a desire to return the benefit or at least to be thankful for it. Why then do we not consider the multitude of Divine favors and deal with God in a similar manner?

It is a beautiful custom of the civil authorities of our country to set aside one day every year for the purpose of recalling all God's blessings and thanking Him for them.

To the Catholic every day is a day of thanksgiving. Hence the day of national thanksgiving is in perfect agreement with Catholic thought and Catholic feeling.

We Catholics who live in this free country have special reasons for giving thanks. While the

Church is persecuted in most of the countries of the world, here we live as free men. Yes. From the time of Herod in Judea and Nero in Rome to the wicked infidels of modern France, the hand of the cruel persecutor has ever been raised against the Church of God.

The Founder of the Catholic Church was persecuted. Persecution seems to be a characteristic mark of the true religion of Christ. "The world shall hate and persecute you."

In this country, however, with the exception of an occasional outburst from some seeker after notoriety, the Church is comparatively untrammelled. Hence she is making rapid strides in wealth, numbers and esteem,

Our gratitude to God for all these favors should be unbounded. Let us thank Him for all blessings. Let us pray for a continuation of the peace, prosperity and happiness of our country. Let us pray, too, for the greater blessings of faith and love, that all may with one will and one heart fulfill the law of God.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

TEMPORAL AND ETERNAL

"Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and his justice." St. Matthew VI, 33.

In this day's Gospel Our Lord desires to impress upon us the littleness of temporal and the greatness of eternal things. From the Gospel we learn many important truths. Among them, we learn that there is only one thing necessary for us in this world, and that is to save our souls.

It is not necessary for us to be great; it is not necessary for us to be rich; it is not even necessary for us to enjoy good health; but it is necessary for each and everyone of us to work for our eternal welfare, to save our immortal souls.

God placed us here for that purpose. He did not make us to gain great honors, great riches, or great worldly pleasures; but He placed us in this world that by our good works we may acquire eternal honors, eternal riches and eternal pleasures.

He made us that by knowing, loving and serving Him here we may be happy with Him forever hereafter.

Such is the grandeur of our destiny — the enjoyment of God for all eternity. This is the end for which man was placed in this world.

God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden for an end. This end was that, obeying God's commandment, he might live forever. But Adam broke God's commandment, was doomed to sickness and death, and transmitted sin, death and other evils to his posterity.

God placed us in the garden of His Church for an end. He gave us certain commandments to obey. He furnished us seven fountains of grace, the seven sacraments, to assist us in keeping the commandments and remaining steadfast in seeking our eternal home. But have we not proved untrue to our end? Have we not, time and again, broken the commandments of God? If God were to say to us as He did to Adam "Where art thou"? would we not like Adam have to hide our faces in shame on account of our transgressions of the law?

An eternity of happiness or of woe awaits us. If we were to die now, what would be our fate? Would we go to eternal punishment or to reward eternal? Let us ask ourselves these questions in all seriousness and sincerity.

Each of us has but one soul. If by our improper use of temporal things that is doomed to eternal

misery, what will it avail to be honored, famous, or rich?

What good did it do Solomon to be the richest and the wisest of men? Of what benefit was it to have all the luxuries that gold could purchase, to have all the temporal things that one could wish? He used those temporal things badly. He grievously sinned, and, had he died in that state, would have merited an eternal punishment. But, seeing the error of his ways, he repented and declared that "all is vanity" except to love God.

Of what permanent value is it to our great railroad men, oil men, steel men, or others to be millionaires? For, if they have gained their millions by acts of injustice, if they have grown rich by oppressing the poor, if they have made a god of money, if they have set too much of their affections on temporal things, they have no place in their affections for eternal things, for the one, true, and only God, Who is to be loved, served and adored.

Let us learn a lesson from others. Let us look out for our true interests. Let us not be fools, seeking the things of the world; but let us seek "first the kingdom of God and his justice." Let us consider earnestly, seriously, conscientiously and prayerfully the littleness, the nothingness of temporal things and the greatness, the importance of

eternal things; then let us resolve to use temporal things only as a means to assist us in attaining eternal happiness.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE MALICE OF SIN

"Young man, I say to thee, arise. And he that was dead sat up, and began to speak." St. Luke VII, 14, 15.

The young man whom Our Lord restored to life is a figure of one spiritually dead. By one spiritually dead is meant a person in mortal sin. Mortal sin kills the soul by depriving it of its life, which is sanctifying grace.

It is well for us frequently to consider the nature of sin and contrast the condition of him who has yielded in time of temptation with that of one who resists and gains a victory over Satan and his own wicked passions.

I

Our catechism tells us that sin is any wilful thought, word, deed or omission contrary to the law of God. We can never understand its real malice; for it is an offense against an infinite be-

ing, and we know that the higher the dignity of the person offended, the greater the offense. Hence, when the person offended is infinite, the offense is infinite, and the finite can never comprehend the infinite.

Though we can never fully understand the malice and nature of sin, we can have a good idea of it by considering some of the punishments God has inflicted upon sinners.

Lucifer committed only one sin of thought, and he was banished to hell for all eternity with all the rebel angels. The only difference between St. Michael, in the highest court of heaven, and Lucifer, in the lowest pit of hell, is one mortal sin. Just think of it; one mortal sin unforgiven would deprive us of the sight of God for all eternity. And how many have we not committed? Oh, let us tremble and seek forgiveness with a humble and contrite heart! Our first parents, by a single mortal sin, were the cause of all the evils, all the wars, all the pestilence with which their posterity has been afflicted.

Even for a venial sin, for lack of faith, Moses was not allowed to enter the promised land, and Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of salt. Again, we know that our sins were the cause of the passion and death of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

II

From these considerations we can arrive at some idea of the nature and malice of sin; and, while thinking of its malice, let us examine the condition of him who has yielded to its allurements. Pleasure is the bait held out when we are tempted to sin. But the Apostle says, these "wages," this bait "is death." He means that these pleasures, this deceitful happiness, this apparent good, ceases the moment it is enjoyed. Other pleasures may follow, but they, too, are doomed to a speedy death. What, then, have we gained by yielding to temptation? Where are our wages? They are gone forever. For they were the pleasures, the wages of sin and the "wages of sin is death."

Happy would we be, did death overtake our sinful pleasures only in this life. But such is not the case. Each sin is treason against our legitimate master, who will be our judge. A Being, a Judge of infinite justice can not but punish treason; thus the wages of sin both here and hereafter is death. But can we not repent? Certainly, we can, if we will. Still when we remember what is implied by the word repentance; when we consider that it means a sincere sorrow for the past, a sincere feeling that could the past be recalled the sinner would rather

die than yield to forbidden pleasures; when we recall to mind the fact, that the habitual sinner puts off this repentance to some future time; then, we fear his repentance will be too late. For God has not promised him the future. How does he know he will be alive to-morrow? Can not God say to him as he did to the rich man as recorded in the Gospel: "Thou fool, this night shall they require thy soul of thee, and whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided?" What have you now for your ill-gotten riches, your sinful pleasures? An eternity of woe with not a single oasis of joy to brighten the monotony of the desert of affliction.

III

Turn we now to consider the condition of one who victoriously resists temptation. He refuses sinful pleasures — pleasures forbidden by God and His Church. He stands aloof from the crowd and, comparing the transitory pleasures of time with the everlasting joys of eternity, says: "No! I will not yield. I will not purchase repentance at so dear a rate. I will not exchange real for apparent happiness, the joys of eternity for the pleasures of a moment. I will not do that which some time I shall wish not to have done." But is not such a one more miserable than the sinner in this life? No,

assuredly not; both in this life and the next his generous Master will reward him for his fidelity. For if there is any real happiness in this world, it surely belongs to him whose pure conscience tells him he has overcome his passions and kept the laws of his God. If such a one is happy in life, he is far happier in death. His conflicts with his enemies, the world, the flesh and the devil, are then over, and how consoling is their remembrance. He has fought the good fight, he has conquered, and he has the assured hope of an eternal crown. He awaits death without a murmur. He is perfectly resigned to the will of God. He has done his duty, avoided sin with its fleeting joys, and is now ready to enter into the joys of his Lord.

Let us frequently recall to mind the nature and malice of sin. Let us not forget that it is an infinite offense, since it is against God an infinite being; that mortal sin kills the soul; and, although it may afford us a moment's happiness, it will cause us to be unhappy for all eternity. These thoughts together with the thought of the enviable condition of the dying Christian who has resisted his passions will serve to keep us from sin. With them ever before our minds we will be encouraged to

resist the devil and our evil inclinations. By thus conquering our spiritual enemies we shall one day hear the sweet invitation of Jesus Christ to eternal felicity; saying "Well done, thou good and faithful servant; because thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will place thee over many things, enter thou into the joys of thy Lord."

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE LORD'S DAY

"Is it lawful to heal on the Sabbath day?" St. Luke XIV, 3.

To the Catholic, to the true Christian, every day is holy. No day of his life should pass without prayer, without making acts of adoration to God on account of His omnipotence and of thanksgiving for His benefits. From the very beginning, however, the Church set aside certain seasons and days of the year when her members are to withdraw more particularly from the cares and labors of the world and meditate upon the birth, lifework, sufferings, death and glorious resurrection of the Son of God, when they can follow Him in spirit from the crib of Bethlehem to the cross of Calvary, recall all He suffered for fallen man, resolve to imi-

tate Him in His sufferings so that they may triumph with Him in His glorious resurrection.

But of all these days, Sunday is the first and most important. Its proper Christian name is the Lord's day. Sunday is the Pagan name, meaning the day of the Sun; while the Sabbath of the Old Law is our Saturday.

I

Since the Sabbath day, which is mentioned in this the third commandment and which was kept holy by the people of God in the Old Law, corresponds to our Saturday, many wonder why it is that we Catholics keep holy Sunday the first day instead of the Sabbath, Saturday, the seventh day of the week.

To Catholics a sufficient reason for this change is the fact that the Church teaches it. For they know, recognize and acknowledge that the Church is Christ's representative on earth; that Christ said to her "he that heareth you heareth me"; and hence they believe that when the Church teaches it Christ teaches it. But those outside of the Catholic Church, who can find no text of Scripture authorizing the change must at least accept this one thing upon the authority of the Catholic Church, who tells us she made the change in Apostolic

times. But why did the Church make this change? Let us see.

The Sabbath was instituted in the Old Law in memory of the rest of God after the six days' work of creation and also in memory of the deliverance of God's people from the bondage of Egypt. The law setting aside some time to the worship of the one only true God is natural, hence unchangeable. The law setting aside the seventh day of the week as this time was ceremonial, hence it could be changed from the seventh to the first day of the week as it was by the Church in the time of the Apostles.

The Sunday was substituted for the Sabbath in memory of the great mysteries of the resurrection of Christ and the descent of the Holy Ghost. These mysteries were accomplished on the first day of the week. And as they show a spiritual deliverance and creation far superior to the first, as our Saviour Himself sanctified in a certain sense this day by appearing to His disciples on two successive Sundays, it is not without reason that the Apostles, the early Church, designated this day as holy by calling it Dies Dominica, "The day of the Lord," and by commanding all the faithful to sanctify it.

Since we give six days to the cares of the world,

it is but just and reasonable that we dedicate a day to the service of Almighty God from whom all blessings flow. This sanctification of the Lord's day is a public profession of our faith and a nourishment that is necessary for the life of our souls.

Catholics who do not sanctify the Lord's day by abstaining from unnecessary work and attending Mass soon become indifferent to all religious duties, fall away from the Church altogether, enter upon mixed marriages, join forbidden societies, become drunkards, go from bad to worse until they finally lose their souls.

II

The Sanctification of the Sunday includes two distinct obligations: that of resting from servile works and that of attending to our religious duties. This law prohibiting servile works is beneficial to our bodies as well as to our souls. It is well known that labor continued without interruption would soon prove injurious to the most robust constitution. This law of reposing one day in seven furnishes the laborer with a means of resting his wearied limbs, recuperating his lost strength, renewing his wasted energies and gaining new strength, energy, vigor for the coming six days of work.

The soul, however, derives the greatest benefit from this law of repose. For unless man rests on this day he cannot give God that honor, that worship He exacts, and if this precept is observed, all others will be observed. Hence, we must abstain from unnecessary servile work of all kinds and from all that would hinder a due observance of the Lord's day. It has been said, and I think experience of everyone will confirm the assertion, that the two most certain means of becoming poor are to steal and to work on Sunday. Notice the Catholic who, knowing his duty, stays away from Mass on Sunday and fixes his fence, chops wood, salts his cattle, or does some other work that he could just as well do on Saturday. Is he any better off for so doing? Does he get rich faster than his neighbors? No. In nine cases out of ten the opposite is the result. And even if such a way of acting would make him rich, would it be right? Would it be pleasing to Almighty God? No. Such a one would break a commandment of God, commit mortal sin and go to hell if he should die in that state. For we must not only abstain from servile work on Sunday but must, in order to keep the commandment properly, engage in works of religion. The principal duty of religion to be fulfilled on Sunday is to be present at the holy Sacrifice

of the Mass. All the faithful who have reached the age of reason are bound when possible to hear Mass on Sunday and holidays of obligation. If we are absent without sufficient reason, we commit a mortal sin. We must hear Mass in a becoming manner, with respect and devotion. We should not think of other things while at Mass, as, for example, of our neighbor's dress or hat, of some business speculation, or of some pleasant game. Our thoughts should be on God, Whom we should endeavor to worship in spirit and in truth.

III

The Third Commandment also forbids us to profane the Lord's day. We profane it not only by forbidden work, but also by committing sin and by dangerous and wicked amusements. The profanation of the Lord's day is a grievous offence in the eyes of God, an insult to religion and a scandal to our neighbor. It causes forgetfulness of God and destroys Christianity in the soul.

Look at that brave class of men who are bound by their iron masters to work Sunday, to whom Sunday is the same as Monday. I have known many good Catholic men enter the railroad service, young men who fulfilled every religious duty, but who in a short time became indifferent to religion

and to God, not through their own fault so much as through the fault of that nefarious system which compels hundreds of thousands of brave, good, noble, generous souls to work on Sunday, neglect their religious duties and forget their God.

I rejoice that the good people of America are waking up to their true interests. I hope that the day is not far distant when a law will be passed and enforced forbidding the running of trains on Sunday, forbidding all unnecessary work on Sunday, forbidding the opening of a saloon on Sunday and enforcing a strict observance of the Lord's day all over the United States from the Atlantic to Pacific, from Lake Michigan to the Gulf of Mexico.

Every Catholic must be in favor of such a law for the honor of God and the sake of religion. Let us see who are opposed to such a law; then we will have no difficulty in taking our stand on the right side.

Opposed to the Sunday observance we find all the disreputable characters, all the drunkards who desert their homes to spend Sunday in drinking liquor, all saloon keepers who want to take from the poor man on Sunday all he earned on six other days, and all wealthy monopolists whose god is money.

On one side is God, on the other, the devil. God

says, "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day"; do not work on that day; go to Mass; listen to the word of God preached; go to Vespers; pray, and spend the day in reading good books and other pious exercises.

The devil says, Don't keep the Sunday holy; don't go to Mass, its foolishness; don't pray, that's fit for children and old women; work, make money on that day; or go to the saloon or other bad places and have a good time, eat, drink, be merry, get drunk. Which side will you choose — that of God or the devil? The Christian cannot hesitate.

Let us, my dear friends, endeavor to spend the Sunday properly. Let us, above all, do no work except what is necessary, such as the chores, and certain household duties. Let us attend Mass every Sunday, if it is possible. If unable to be present at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass every Sunday, let us assemble our family at the usual time for Mass and say our Mass prayers or the rosary in common. Let us avoid sin and occasions of sin, especially on this day consecrated to the honor of God. Let us spend the day in a Christian manner. If we do, God will bless us. If we do not spend the Lord's day in a Christian manner, if we spend it in unnecessary work, in rioting, in drunkenness, we will be sailing under the banner of the devil

and cannot expect God's blessing but rather the chastisement He threatened to profaners of the Sabbath: "They grievously violated my Sabbath, I said therefore that I would pour out my indignation upon them." (Ezech. XX, 13.) Do you wish God to avert this threat? Then keep His day holy. Abstain from work. Go to Mass. And His blessings will be showered upon you.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

ONE THING NECESSARY

"Master, which is the great commandment of the law?" St. Matthew XXII, 36.

This question addressed by the lawyer to our Divine Lord shows that the one thing necessary — the soul's salvation — is ever uppermost in the mind of man. Our Lord's answer "Love God," "Love thy neighbor" gives us in a few words man's duty here on earth.

Man is placed in this world to prepare for heaven. Heaven is his true home. His life on earth is fleeting; while in heaven it will be everlasting. Hence the amassing of wealth, the desire for honors, the seeking after the pleasures of the world are

but secondary matters. There is but one important business in this world for everyone. There is but one thing necessary. That is the soul's salvation. If the soul is lost, all is lost, and heaven, our being's end and aim, cannot be attained.

"What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world: and suffer the loss of his soul?" (St. Mark VIII, 36.)

I

What must we do to save our souls and thus attain "our being's end and aim, attend to our most important business, do the one thing necessary?

To save our souls, our catechism tells us, we must worship God by faith, hope and charity; that is, we must believe in Him, hope in Him and love Him with our whole heart. We must love God and our neighbor.

"He that believeth and is baptized," says Jesus Christ, "shall be saved; he that believeth not shall be condemned." (St. Mark XVI, 16.)

We must not only believe, but we must also live in accordance with our belief. We must believe everything taught us by the religion of Christ. For He is the way, the truth and the life, the way we must follow, the truth we must seek and the life we must try to attain.

This true religion of Christ which we must believe and follow in order to be saved is, and can be, but one. Christ cannot contradict Himself by teaching two different doctrines.

St. John (X, 16) tells us that "there shall be but one fold and one shepherd," and St. Paul says there can be but one faith as there is but one Lord. In this one sheepfold of the one shepherd, this one true Church of Christ, we must be, if we would be saved. Hence no one is safe in following the religion in which he was born unless it is the true religion. If he has any doubts about his religion being the true religion of Christ, he must do all in his power to solve the doubts, he must do all in his power to find out what one of all those claiming to be the true religion founded by the Son of God corresponds to the religion He founded.

II

That Christ founded a religion is certain. Nothing is clearer in the New Testament than this fact. "I will build my church" He says, not my churches. He built it upon a Rock against which He declared the gates of hell should never prevail.

He gave His Church authority to teach all nations and commanded all to hear her. "Go teach

all nations," He says, and again, "He that heareth you heareth me."

This Church, which Christ founded upon a rock, this Church which was to last to the end of time, this Church to which He gave authority to teach all nations and which He commanded all to hear, this Church cannot teach error, is infallible, because St. Paul calls her "the pillar and the ground of truth" and Christ Himself declares that the spirit of truth will teach her all truth, that the gates of hell can never prevail against her (which they would if she could teach error). This Church is the Catholic Church.

She is the only Church existing to-day that can trace her origin from now, century by century, through the lapse of ages up the corridors of time to the age of Christ; she is the only one of all the churches that claims to teach truths of faith and morals infallibly, the only one that has a living, speaking, unerring authority to teach the way to heaven; she is the only Church that has existed 1800 years and triumphed over all the trials and persecutions raised against her; she is the only Church that, teaching the doctrines of Christ pure and undefiled, has remained as Christ founded her. From her all other churches have separated, and, if she be studied with sincerity, it will be found that

she teaches neither idolatry, superstition nor any of the wicked doctrines which she is falsely accused of teaching, that she does not keep her children in ignorance, that she desires fair inquiry into all she teaches and that to be loved she needs only to be known.

Since the one thing necessary in this world is to save our souls; since to save our souls we must worship God by faith, hope and charity; since we cannot do this unless we are members of His Church, it follows that we must enter that one Holy, Catholic, Apostolic Church which He left upon earth to continue His mission of leading men to heaven and outside of which there is no salvation.

Let us, then, thank God that we are members of that true Church.

But let us not presume too much on this membership. For it will do us no good to be members of the true Church unless we live lives of purity, charity, temperance, mortification — lives fashioned after the life of our Divine Model — unless we love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves.

Let us endeavor to lead such lives. Let us keep ever before us the fact that it will profit us nothing to gain the whole world, if we lose our souls.

Let us frequently call to mind Death, Judgment, Heaven and Hell and ponder the truth that the only important business in this world is to save our souls.

These thoughts will cause us to lead such lives here as will gain for us eternal happiness hereafter.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SPIRITUAL PALSY

"They brought to him one sick of the palsy lying in a bed." St. Matt. IX, 2.

On a certain occasion, as our Lord was entering the city of Capharnaum, He was met by a number of people carrying a man sick of the palsy. Jesus, seeing their faith and having compassion on the sick man, cured him.

As palsy enervates the body and diminishes its strength, so there is a sort of spiritual palsy by which the soul is enervated and its strength diminished. This spiritual palsy is caused by sloth, by tepidity and by indifference.

Are you subject to this complaint? Are you weak in bearing adversity? Do you keep your

good resolutions? Do you say your prayers regularly and attend to your other religious duties? If you do not attend to your duties as a Christian, you are suffering from spiritual palsy. Christ the physician of your soul will heal you.

Jesus Christ, Who is God, will fill your souls with all necessary graces and cure them of all spiritual maladies. See the faith of the sick man He cured of the palsy. If you have faith, He will heal you of your spiritual palsy.

The reason we are not healed of our maladies, the reason we do not make greater progress in virtue, the reason our prayers are not answered, is, we have not the proper faith.

Let us ask God for the gift of faith. Let us ask for a strong, a firm, a lively faith. Let us say to Him, "O Lord, I believe, Help thou my unbelief." Let us not be of the number of those who, losing faith, reject God.

We should not imagine for a moment that it is a sign of intellectual activity to deny the divinity of Jesus Christ. His divinity is established on principles so certain, so solid that you cannot deny them without overturning all certitude. And yet there are some who deny His divinity.

The first one of any importance who denied the divinity of Jesus Christ was Arius. A learned and

eloquent man, he gathered a large number of followers around him. This was during the early part of the fourth century. But God's justice overtook the wicked blasphemer at the very moment he seemed to triumph.

God sometimes allows the wicked to triumph for a while for some purpose by us not understood. All of us know persons who deny God's existence, who deny the divinity of Jesus Christ, who lead bad lives, but who seem to be contented and prosperous. Like the blasphemous Arius, their triumph will be of short duration. Sooner than they imagine, God's avenging wrath will strike those who by tongue, or pen, or act, deny Him or His Divine Son.

If there is one thing more than another taught by this day's Gospel it is that Jesus Christ is God. The miracle recorded therein is but one of a series performed by Him. Any one of them sufficiently proves His divinity.

Another lesson to be learned is the necessity of a lively faith. Let us remember the fate of Arius and many other heretical blasphemers and avoid their doubts and their sad end.

Let us believe in God and in Him Whom He sent, Jesus Christ. Let us ask Him to heal our Spiritual palsy, all our Spiritual maladies, so that, living ac-

cording to our belief here, we may hope to spend an eternity in loving Him.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

"Many are called but few are chosen." St. Matt. XXII, 14.

The wedding feast spoken of in the twenty-second chapter of St. Matthew's Gospel is a figure of the Holy Eucharist. Our Lord prepared for us this feast. He sent out His servants, His priests, to invite His friends to come and partake of the banquet. None of them came. Some were busy on their farms, some in their stores and others in their houses.

Again He sent His servants to invite everyone they met, for those that were invited were not worthy. Many came.

One of the guests had not on the wedding garment. Orders were given that he should be bound and cast into exterior darkness.

The garment we must have, in order to partake of this Eucharistic food from the table of the Lord, is the garment of innocence and purity. Whoever

dares to approach this table to receive Holy Communion without this proper garment, without being free from sin, tramples under foot the Body and Blood of Jesus Christ and, unless reparation be made, will be cast into exterior darkness, where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, "For many are called but few are chosen."

Few are chosen, because few respond to the invitation. Few are chosen, because few know themselves. There is too little self-knowledge and too much self-ignorance among so-called Christians, and that is the cause of the ruin of many.

I

Man must know himself before he can advance in virtue. He must know the state of his soul, his predominant passions, his faults and imperfections. Such knowledge is required as a foundation for a Christian life.

The Christian's life should be a continual progress in overcoming temptation, in conquering his passions and in practicing those virtues necessary for salvation. Without a knowledge of himself he will make little progress in conquering his passions.

The man who knows himself thoroughly, who is continually on his guard to ward off his cunning

assailants, finds great difficulty at times in gaining the victory over his wicked passions. If such a person finds great difficulty in overcoming temptations and in conquering his passions, how much more difficult, how next to impossible must it be for one who, not knowing himself, makes no effort to overcome temptation and control passion.

As a man cannot conquer his passions, so neither can he make any progress in virtue without self-knowledge.

Humility is the fundamental virtue. Without self-knowledge, humility cannot exist. Self-knowledge is to humility, what the foundation is to a building. "Humility," says St. Bernard, "Consists in a contempt of ourselves."

How can we have a contempt for ourselves unless we know ourselves, see ourselves thoroughly, all our vileness, our passions, our inclinations and understand that we are deserving of contempt?

Pride is the opposite of humility. The proud man thinks he is better than he is, because he does not know himself. The humble man, knowing himself, values himself rightly.

II

Self-knowledge is also necessary for the practice of charity. The more a person knows of his own

failings, the more disposed will he be to make allowance for the failings of others.

The person, who not knowing himself, thinks he is perfect, will expect to find others perfect. He will criticize the faults of others. Often he will censure them. Not seeing the beam in his own eye, he will try to remove the mote from the eye of another. Both sexes, all conditions contain many such persons.

Like the Pharisee of old, they set themselves up as paragons of excellence, while if they would examine closely into themselves, learn to know themselves, they would find that they were vile hypocrites. They should endeavor to correct themselves before setting themselves up as teachers in Israel.

There is no virtue that is not acquired by self-knowledge. We cannot practise patience; we cannot practise forgiveness of injuries; we cannot perform properly the duty of prayer without a knowledge of ourselves.

We must know that we are composed of a double element, material and spiritual, a body and a soul, and that the soul is destined to live forever, happy or miserable according to our works here. We must also know our natural inclinations and our

passions and direct our lives in such channels as will lead to God.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE DOUBTER

"Unless you see signs and wonders, you believe not." St. John IV, 48.

These words spoken by Our Lord to the ruler of Capharnaum, are applicable to many of the present day. They are doubters. They believe not. They expect to see signs and wonders. They will not accept the testimony of ordinary witnesses. They want something extraordinary. And even if Our Lord Himself came again upon earth and performed great wonders, many would not believe. There would be doubters even then. No one is so blind as he who does not wish to see, no one so great a doubter as he who does not wish to believe.

Deluded by his passions, deceived by his love of self and led astray by worldly motives, he shuts his eyes to the light of reason and will not notice anything that does not pander to his passions, minister to his self-love and further his worldly interests.

Hence he tries to persuade himself that there is no supernatural, that there is no God. But, do what he may, he cannot fully stifle in himself that feeling natural to man that there is a Supreme Being, that there is a God, the Creator and Lord of all things, Whose will must be done if we would be saved.

I

The idea of God is natural to man: Cicero tells us that even in Pagan times there never was a people in whom this idea did not exist. Man's reason leads to the knowledge of God. For order and harmony suppose an intelligent cause, and the order, harmony and beauty of the works of nature point to an intelligent author of all this beauty, order and harmony. This intelligent author can be none other than God.

Jews believe in God, pagans believe in a Supreme Ruler of the universe; Christians believe in God; it is only the fool, the Bible tells us, who says in his heart there is no God.

II

As reason rightly used leads to God, so reason likewise tells us we must obey God's will, if we would be saved. We must obey God strictly, un-

complainingly, unhesitatingly. We must not through idle curiosity try to dive too deep into the ways and mysteries of God. It should be sufficient for us to know that God commands a thing. Knowing that God commands something we should obey the divine command without turning back like Lot's wife and be lost when almost saved.

She had almost gained the mountain of safety. Had she not doubted and broken God's command, she would have been saved. Had she persevered a few moments longer, she would not have been handed down to us as a fearful example of those whose curiosity prompts them to doubt God's word and disobey His commands.

She was already on the road to salvation. She had led a good life. She was selected by God as one of the very few just people in the wicked Cities of the Plain. Relying on her past good deeds, she thought she was sure of salvation. She thought God was certain to save her. Hence, she looked back to see if God had kept His word. Alas! He kept it too well for her future happiness.

Hundreds of Christians imitate Lot's wife. Remembering their past real or imaginary good lives; recalling to mind the fact that God's grace has led them to the true Church or caused them to be

born of Catholic parents; they rest secure without making proper use of the sacramental aids furnished by the Church.

Many, persuaded that the Catholic Church is the true Church, come to its threshold, doubt, look back and are lost.

Oh how dangerous it is to doubt God's existence or His word! It is terrible to hesitate, to look back when our salvation is at stake

Let us never doubt God's existence. Let us never hesitate to do His holy will. Let us persevere in well doing to the end and merit the crown of glory.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

PURGATORY

"And his lord being angry delivered him to the torturers, until he paid all the debt." St. Matthew XVIII, 34.

The misery of the wicked servant delivered to the torturers reminds us of the suffering of the soul delivered to the tortures of Purgatory. As the unjust servant was delivered to the torturers until he paid all the debt, so the soul not yet purified must remain in the purifying fires of Purgatory until, all

the debt being paid, it is fit to enter the realms of the All Holy, All Pure, Almighty God.

I

We are taught by Christian revelation that besides heaven and hell, a state of everlasting happiness and of everlasting pain, there exists a certain state in which the souls of the just who have not sufficiently satisfied the justice of God are purified by punishment before being admitted into heaven; and this is properly called Purgatory.

It is a dogma of faith that "there is a Purgatory and that the souls detained there are helped by the prayers of the faithful and especially by the acceptable sacrifice of the Altar," by the Holy Mass. This we must believe but not blindly; for this dogma is founded on reason, tradition and Scripture.

To one who believes in heaven and hell — a place of everlasting bliss and of everlasting pain — the doctrine of Purgatory must appear as a necessity. For, it is certain that nothing defiled can enter heaven. But it is possible that many die guilty of slight venial sins. Therefore, it must be said, that these are damned, which is impious; that what is defiled can enter heaven, which is unscriptural; or that there is a Purgatory, a state in which such souls are made pure as the driven snow so that

they can enter the presence of their Maker. For an infinitely just God cannot condemn to the same eternal punishment the child who dies guilty of a slight fault and the hardened murderer. No; He will render to everyone according to his works.

The Church from the very beginning always believed in the existence of Purgatory, as is evident from the practice of praying for the dead. She believed those prayers would be beneficial to the departed in obtaining for them the remission of their sins. Hence she prayed for those in Purgatory, since those in heaven needed no prayers and out of hell there is no redemption. The Fathers, Chrysostom, Cyril, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine and others are witnesses that the doctrine of the Church in their time in regard to Purgatory was the same as it is now.

St. Augustine, in his Confessions, says that his mother St. Monica entreated him to remember her soul at the altar, and after her decease he performed this duty in order, as he declares, "to obtain the pardon of her sins."

All admit that the early Christians — those of the first five or six centuries — practised the religion of Christ pure and undefiled. But they believed in Purgatory, because they practised praying for the dead.

What reason teaches and tradition affirms regarding the existence of Purgatory is confirmed by Scripture. In the 12th chapter of the 2nd Book of Machabees, it is related that the pious General Judas Machabeus, sent 12,000 drachmas to Jerusalem for sacrifice to be offered for his soldiers slain in battle, and the sacred writer adds "It is, therefore, a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from their sins." From this we see, that Judas and the Jews one hundred and fifty years before Christ believed in Purgatory and were in the habit of practicing some religious rites for the relief of those who departed in holiness but not free from every sin. Christ instead of condemning this belief of the Jews confirmed it.

St. Ambrose and other Fathers say Our Saviour speaks of Purgatory when He says in the 12th chapter of St. Luke "I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence till thou hast paid the very last unit."

In the 32nd verse of the 12th chapter of St. Matthew we read "If he speak a word against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him either in this world or in the next." These words imply that some sins are forgiven in the next world. But they are not forgiven in heaven where "nothing defiled can enter," nor in hell, since out of hell there

is no redemption; hence we conclude that there must be a middle state, call it what you will; we call it Purgatory.

II

Reason, the teaching of antiquity, and Scripture then all prove the existence of Purgatory and that the souls detained there are helped by our prayers.

There are many reasons why we should aid those poor souls; first among these is charity. "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends for the hand of the Lord is heavy on me," they constantly cry out to us.

If a man was in a fire or in a pit from which he could not escape, would you not try all in your power to help him out? They are in a fire from which they cannot escape. Then, do not rest a moment until you assist them by your prayers and especially by having the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass offered for them.

Gratitude and justice may call upon you to assist them. Some of them may be near and dear to you — a fond father — a beloved, tender-hearted mother who may be there suffering for being too indulgent to you — a kind brother, sister or friend may be there suffering on your account. Then as-

sist them by your prayers every day of your lives. Say the rosary for them, and have a Mass said for them, and be sure they will not forget you.

We have seen that to one that believes in a place of everlasting happiness and of everlasting pain the doctrine of Purgatory must appear as necessity. We have seen that this doctrine is founded on reason, tradition and Scripture. We have seen, too, that the souls detained there are relieved by the prayers and alms of the faithful and especially by the Holy Sacrifice of the Altar. Is not this a consoling belief and practice? And will you refuse to pray for them, will you refuse to say the rosary for them and have a Mass offered for them who cry to you "Have pity on me, have pity on me, at least you my friends for the hand of the Lord is heavy on me?" No; we will not neglect them for we know that death cannot dissolve the communion of saints which subsists in the Church nor prevent an intercourse of good offices between us and our departed friends.

We may be able to help them more in the other world by our prayers, our sacrifices and alms than we could in this world by temporal benefits. Hence we celebrate the obsequies of the dead by such good works and our funeral service consists of prayers and Psalms offered for their eternal happiness.

These acts of devotion pious Catholics perform for the deceased who are near and dear to them and for the dead in general at all times, but especially on their anniversary, and during the month of November. Such benefits we may be assured will be repaid by those whose happiness we assist in attaining, or by the God of Mercy, who will reward our charity.

And what a comfort it is to us to reflect that when our time comes to descend into the grave we will not be forgotten by our Catholic relatives and friends. How consoling is this intercourse between the living child and the deceased parent — between husband and wife — between friend and friend — between life and death —" What a beautiful feature in our religion to impel the heart of man to virtue by the power of love and to make him feel that his prayers, his alms, that even the very coin which gives bread for a moment to a needy fellow-being, entitles perhaps some rescued soul to an eternal position at the table of the Lord."

"Hasten, Lord, their hour, and bid them come to Thee,
To that glorious home where they shall ever gaze on Thee."

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

OUR DUTIES

"Render, therefore, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." St. Matt. XXII, 21.

In these words of Our Saviour taken from the Gospel of to-day we have a rule in regard to our duties to God and to men. The Pharisees, wishing to find some accusation against Jesus, sent their disciples to ask Him if it were lawful to pay tribute to Cæsar. If He said, "Yes," they would accuse Him of being an enemy of the Jews; if "No," He would be the enemy of the Romans. In answer, Our Saviour, after looking at the coin of tribute, asked, "Whose image and inscription is this?" Being told that it was Cæsar's, He said, "Render, therefore, to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's."

By these words Jesus Christ teaches us that it is our duty to give to men and to human institutions what is due them and to reserve for Him all the affections of our hearts.

I

Of the many things due to men love is the first and most important. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" is one of the great commandments of the law. The very order of human existence seems to point out the necessity of mutual aid between those who need it and those who can give it.

In the weakness of childhood or the feebleness of old age we should perish promptly were it not for the aid and protection furnished by our fellow-beings.

We would grow up in ignorance of God and of our duty were it not for the assistance of others.

Cruelty in legislation, hardheartedness in social life and oppression of the weak characterize the teachings and doings of men not imbued with Christian principles.

But Christ inculcates the mutual duty of love and charity "a new commandment I give you that you love one another." After His ascension the Apostles and those who succeeded them continued this teaching, so that wherever the Christian religion penetrated, charity was considered one of its principal marks, one of its greatest commandments.

Paganism and human passions were hostile to

this teaching; still it spread its sweet influence on every side. Even before the close of the Persecutions it had accomplished wonders; for the charity of the Christians in taking care of even the suffering pagans who had been abandoned by their friends was most instrumental in the conversion of pagans.

Look around you, and you will see on all sides the beneficial workings of this law of charity in the many charitable institutions and societies scattered throughout the world. The duty of doing unto others as we would have others do unto us is very often neglected or overlooked by Christians. This duty, however, practically applied, has provided for every species of suffering. It has provided homes and clothing and instruction and nurses and food for orphans and infants, retreats for the aged and infirm and hospitals for the sick.

If we perform this duty of loving our neighbor, of doing to others as we would have others do unto us, we will have no difficulty in giving everything else to men that is due them, no difficulty in rendering to Cæsar what is Cæsar's. If we do this, we shall be good Christians, good citizens, good parents and good children.

II

This duty of rendering to Cæsar what is Cæsar's — of giving everyone his due — is easy to one who renders to God what is God's — who reserves for God all the affections of his heart. For, if we love God with our whole heart, we cannot but love our neighbor; if we love God sincerely we will avoid everything that displeases Him.

And how ungrateful that person is who does not love Him! For what are we ourselves? Nothing. Absolutely nothing. God created us out of nothing. He gave us all we have. We could not so much as move our arm without Him. If a friend gave us a costly present would we not be drawn to love him? But God has given us all we have. He gave us the beautiful clothes we wear, the delicious food we eat and the sparkling water we drink. He gave us this glorious universe we live in, with its variety of scenery to enchant the eye; with its snow-capped mountains, its green-carpeted hills and its blooming valleys; with its open prairies teeming with golden grain; its luxuriant pastures covered with glossy-coated animals, and its magnificent forests filled with the beauties of nature. He gave all this and more. Still we do not love Him. O, God! How ungrateful we are.

Naturally, we love those who love us. Who could love us more than God the Son who became man and died on the cross for us? "Greater love than this no man has that a man lay down his life for his friend."

The goodness, mercy and charity of God to His creatures should cause us to love Him, even if we were not commanded to do so. "Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind" and "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Do we always render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and to God the things that are God's? Do we love God above all things and our neighbor as ourselves? Do we do to others as we would have others do to us? Are we obedient to all the regulations of our Church as to God Himself? Do we do our duty towards our Church or do we make others bear our burdens for us? Are we good peaceable citizens and obedient to the laws of our country? Do you always give your children a good example? And are you, children, obedient and kind to your parents? These are matters for our serious examination and consideration. For if we love God with a true, noble affection we will not break His laws; we will not offend Him by our sins, our meanness or our trickery; we will not re-

pine at hunger, sickness or loss of crops; but will ever be ready to say "O! God, Thy will not mine be done." If you always keep yourselves in this disposition you will have no difficulty in rendering "to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and to God the things that are God's." You will be good citizens and good Christians always fulfilling your duty to your country, your fellow-man and your God. And at the end of your life, when the temporal world shall pass away and you enter the spiritual, you will receive the crown reserved for those who "render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and to God the things that are God's."

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE TRUE FOLLOWER

"Be followers of me, brethren." PHILIP. III, 17.

In his Epistle to the Philippians, St. Paul exhorts them to lead better lives. He proposes his life as a model. "Be followers of me," he says. Do not follow the teaching of false prophets. Do not follow those whose god is their appetite, whose end is destruction, who are continually seeking the

good things of the world to their soul's detriment.

Many seek their happiness in the wealth, the honors, or the pleasures of the world. Do not imitate them; but "be followers of me" says St. Paul, as I am of Christ Who is the way, the truth and the life — the way we must follow, the truth we must believe if we wish to attain a life of everlasting happiness.

As is well known, St. Paul, who thus exhorts the early Christians to follow his example, was, before his conversion, a persecutor of the Church. It was after his miraculous conversion that he made this exhortation. If, as a Jew, he hated and persecuted the Church of Christ, he was honest in his convictions.

He does not wish the Christians to imitate his deeds done before the gift of grace opened his eyes to the light of Divine truth. It is his life after his conversion, when a true Christian, a follower of Christ in deed and in word, that he wishes us to imitate. For Saul, the bitterest foe of Christ, became Paul, the zealous Apostle, the ardent disciple, and the humble follower of the God-man.

St. Paul's life is an inspiration. Traveling thousands of miles over land and sea under the most difficult circumstances, enduring trials and privations of a hundred different kinds, suffering ship-

wrecks, scourgings and imprisonment, he patiently endured all for Him Whose follower he was. Undaunted by trials, sufferings and persecutions, he sowed the seed of the Gospel in Western Asia, in the islands of the Mediterranean, and in various parts of Europe.

His success was wonderful. He did more for the propagation of Christ's Church than any other man. Relying on the power of God, he wrought miracles of grace in the hardest hearts. Working principally among the Gentiles, their idols everywhere gave place to the cross of the Crucified One.

Simple, sincere, earnest and zealous, St. Paul had a great influence on everyone, even on the greatest and most learned. Hundreds moved by his words and example gave their lives to further God's glory.

For God's sake Paul suffered everything. He denied himself, suffered willingly and made great sacrifices in order to lead souls to God. His life is a beautiful one for us to imitate.

The true follower will endeavor to imitate the life of St. Paul as he imitated the life of our Divine Model.

The true follower will, in imitation of St. Paul, be a zealous member of God's Church. He will lead a good, upright Christian life. He will have

charity towards all, malice towards none. At all times he will do his duty to God, to his country and to his fellow-man. He will be honest, honorable, upright, pure and temperate.

The True Follower of Christ, having imitated St. Paul's beautiful Christian life, when his time comes to die can say with the Apostle: "I have fought the good fight. I have finished my course. I have kept the faith. As to the rest, there is laid up for me a crown of justice, which the Lord, the just Judge, will render to me in that day." (II Timothy IV, 7, 8.)

TWENTY-FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

THE LAST DAY

"Heaven and earth shall pass; but my words shall not pass." St. Matt. XXIV, 35.

These words, my dear friends, taken from the Gospel just read, remind us of the last day. There will come a time, there will certainly come a day which to this world will be final and fatal. That day is already known in the Councils of heaven; but to us one of its most awful circumstances is its

total uncertainty. Like the day of the death of each one of us, it is certain to come, but uncertain when it will come. It will be preceded by signs and warnings; but notwithstanding the most pointed warnings, uncertainty will remain.

I

A little over eighteen hundred years ago Pompeii stood at the foot of Mt. Vesuvius, in all its splendor and glory. It was a magnificent city. In its suburbs many rich Romans had villas. On a certain day in the fall of the year 79, when the amphitheatre was filled with thousands of spectators to witness the games, they were suddenly startled by a great noise — a rumbling and a roaring and a quaking of the earth. Looking towards the mountain they saw the cause. A great smoke was issuing from the crater accompanied by vast quantities of molten matter, which was increasing at a frightful rapidity. First it came rushing down the sides of the mountain; then, with terrible belches it sent the fiery liquid and ashes on the city, and for miles around and beyond. Try to imagine, for words cannot describe, the terrible scene — the consternation and confusion — the howling and yelling and crying for aid. But the city and its inhabitants were doomed to destruction.

This event is but a faint image of what will come to pass on the last day. This great day will be preceded, too, by rumbling and quaking of the earth. There shall be wars and pestilence and famines and earthquakes. War, famine and pestilence are the scourges of the Almighty by which He at times punishes the sins of men. And if they are now so formidable in the day of God's mercy, what will they be then in the day of His wrath?

The earth, as if impatient of its iniquitous burden, will swell and oscillate on its circumference and open its jaws to swallow sinful men. The sea will add its horrors, and announcing God's vengeance strike terror through a guilty world.

"There shall be distress of nations by reason of the roaring of the sea, and of the waves, men withering away through fear and expectation of what shall come upon the world." The air will be charged with vengeance. It will be loaded with pestilence and death. There will be awful lightning and thunder and whirlwinds and tornadoes.

"The sun shall be darkened; the moon shall not give her light; and the stars shall fall from heaven and the powers of heaven shall be moved." Then the earth and the works that are in it shall; as St. Peter says, "be burnt up." As the Lord formerly chastised the world by water, so He will then de-

stroy it by fire. Houses, gardens, villages and cities shall be swept away in a moment by the devouring element and every trace of man's existence on the earth will disappear. Where then will be the great ones of the earth who figured so prominently on account of their riches, their eloquence or their insatiable ambition? They thought they would live forever and had no thought of another life.

O, mockery of earthly ambition! O, vanity of vanities! And all is vanity but to love God and serve Him only.

II

All these terrors are but the forerunners of the great judgment day when the whole race of Adam will be gathered together to be judged. At the appointed time, ere the Judge descends upon the earth, the celestial trumpet shall sound forth the decree: "Arise ye dead and come to judgment." In a moment, says the Apostle, "in the twinkling of an eye, the dead shall rise." They shall issue forth from the bowels of the earth, from the depths of the sea and from the abyss of hell. All shall be there — the rich and poor, the exalted and humble, the infant of a day and the patriarch of nine hundred years. But there will be no distinction then except between the good and bad.

When all are assembled, the Son of God shall appear to judge the living and the dead: "And every eye shall see him." In front of the Judge shall appear the ensign of the cross, the comfort of the just and terror of the wicked. The whole court of heaven will be His attendants. Thus shall the Jews, to their great confusion, behold Him Whom they have crucified; thus, too, shall bad Christians see Him Whom they have again crucified by their sins. Immediately all men's consciences, which are the books, shall be opened and their sins published to the whole world. The most secret sins of their hearts, the sins concealed through shame in confession — all shall be made manifest. Many would almost die of grief, if they thought their father or mother knew what in secret they had committed. Then all the world shall to their confusion know it. Those who have sinned but confessed and repented will render thanks and divine praises to the Lord Who has pardoned them. Virtue then shall appear admirable in all her beauty and vice horrible in all her deformity.

The just Judge will pronounce sentence in favor of the good in these words of love and mercy: "Come ye blessed of my father, possess the kingdom which was prepared for you from the creation of the world." What joy will then fill the saints!

On the contrary, what envy, spite and sorrow will fill the hearts of sinners when they hear Him say: "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire."

This, my dear friends, is the end which is to terminate all time, and this the catastrophe so fearful to the wicked which is to conclude all things temporal. Let us therefore, be careful how we use the things of this world, and that we may use them well, let us look to the last day, that day of terror and amazement, and see how we will be able to stand before a severe judge who receives neither bribes nor excuses. The wise man says that to avoid sin we must remember our last end. Did we frequently and seriously reflect that we must one day give an exact account of our consciences, of the conduct of our whole lives, of all our sins, to a judge who knows and remembers all things, would we not be terrified at the thought of the judgment, of the terrible account we are to give? And would we not endeavor to keep from falling into sin? Let us, then, be convinced that the sure way to avoid condemnation in the next life is to punish and condemn ourselves in this. If we do this we will avoid grievous sin and also avoid that terrible sentence, "Depart ye cursed into everlasting fire."

ALL SAINTS, THEY HAVE SOLVED THE GREAT PROBLEM

"Eye hath not seen nor ear heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him." I Cor. II, 9.

The world, as we know from history, has her galaxy of heroes whom she honors as warriors, statesmen, philosophers and poets. Scarcely are they placed in the tomb when the admiring public begin their demonstrations in their honor. Monuments are erected to their memory, their statues are placed in conspicuous places, while the press is lavish in its praise of their deeds.

As the world, then, has her heroes who have won renown in literature, on the battlefield, or in the forum, so, too, has the Catholic Church her heroes whom she calls upon us daily to honor. But the heroes of the Catholic Church are far greater than those of the world. Yes. As far superior as the supernatural is to the natural, as grace is to nature, as heaven is to earth, so far are the heroes of the Catholic Church above those of the world.

I

Although the Church celebrates almost every day a festival in honor of some special hero, some special

saint, still, as all the saints could not be specially honored every year, she has set apart this day as a general feast day of all Saints. What we admire in the Saints especially, is their fidelity to the will of God. They loved poverty, humility, obedience and mortification in order to more and more resemble their Divine Model. "Excelsior" is the motto of the world. Get riches and honors and be great in the eyes of men. "Blessed are the poor in spirit" is the motto of Jesus Christ and of His saints.

Pride and vanity are the teachings of the world. Humble yourself and you will be exalted, the saints teach us. I will not serve, I'll obey no one, is the silly maxim of the world. "An obedient man shall speak of victories" is the maxim of the saints.

"Eat, drink and be merry, for to-morrow you die" is the advice of the worldling. "If by the spirit you mortify the deeds of the flesh, you shall live" is the lesson inculcated by the lives of the saints.

Take up the life of any of the saints and you will learn most salutary lessons for your admiration and imitation. You will see they had the same corrupt nature to restrain, the same passions to overcome, as you have. But in the long and bitter

conflict they conquered and now enjoy the victor's crown.

If we wish to obtain a similar crown, we must imitate them in the conflict. The great virtue which characterized all of them was mortification. This is the foundation of all sanctity. Since our first parents' sin, human nature has had a strong inclination to vice and repugnance to virtue. Mortification checks this inclination to vice and inclines us to virtue. The mortification practised by the saints is almost incredible. Many of them left great possessions and comforts and retired from the world to deserts or convents where they spent the remainder of their lives in fasting and prayer. Others ate nothing but herbs and drank nothing but water, and slept on no bed but the cold earth. Witness, as an instance, the wonderful mortification, zeal, charity, patience and perseverance of St. Francis Xavier. In him were renewed all the gifts of the Apostles. He had the gift of tongues and of miracles. While talking in one language he was understood by those who spoke other languages. He raised many persons from the dead. He traveled more and converted more than some of the Apostles. His travels would amount to over seventy-five thousand miles, while it is said that he baptized over

one million two hundred thousand with his own hand. We cannot do such great works as St. Francis Xavier, but we can all be pleasing to God by doing our little works well. "No one can excel in great things if he does not first excel in small things."

II

Is it not, my dear friends, a consoling thought, that, no matter what our vocation in life may be, whether we are farmers, or cooks, or laborers, priests or students, if we perform all our duties well, if we do everything because it is pleasing to God and He wills it, we are meriting for ourselves Eternal life and are sure to become saints in heaven? Yes; heaven is full of saints from the humbler walks of life. The farmer from his plow, his wife from the kitchen, the laborer from his spade, the poor widow from her washtub, as well as the student from his desk, the priest from his office and the religious from her cell — all join in singing hymns of praise to the Most High in the kingdom of the blest. What a glorious thought it is that each of us has it in his power to gain heaven, the joys and beauty of which are beyond all the powers of the imagination to conceive. We can have but faint idea of heavenly beauty by a consideration of earthly

beauty. Tourists are enraptured when describing the beauties of lofty mountains raising their snow-capped peaks far above the clouds. A running stream is a beautiful sight. Beautiful, too, is a rolling prairie, a forest's solitude, the rising or setting sun, a calm, clear sky, a vast body of water suggesting the immensity of God, or a wave rising mountain high. All these are beautiful; but this earth is only God's footstool. How beautiful then must be His abiding-place.

If a traveler who has beēn around the world should tell you of a certain island visited by him where there was neither unhealthiness of climate nor change of season — no summer too hot, no winter too severe — where there was no unsightliness, but perfect beauty; where flowers always bloomed and sweet songsters continually warbled; where there was no poverty and no exhaustion; where disease never entered, old age never came and death was unknown; where there was neither mourning nor weeping, but perfect joy; would you not sell all you have immediately and make preparation to depart for this new Elysium, this island of the blest?

Let us, then, sell all and prepare to depart to this island, to heaven. We sell all when we give up our attachment to things of earth and begin to do all for eternity. Do you think more of your money, of

your land, of your stock, of your wife, of your children, of worldly pleasures, of things you will quickly lose than you do of religion, of God? If so, change before it is too late and begin to work for that which you will never lose, Consider the value of the change. The united tortures of all the martyrs were nothing in exchange for eternal happiness. Immediately begin to work for God, to offer up all your little actions to God, faithfully persevere, and your reward will soon follow — which will be no other than that of which St. Paul speaks when he says, "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love him."

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